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THEOLOGICAL
DISSERTATIONS.



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J. C. Knight
DISSERTATIONS;
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CONTAINING,

- I. The NATURE of the SINAI COVE-
NANT. *pp 1-66*
- II. The CHARACTER and PRIVILEGES of
the APOSTOLIC CHURCHES, with an Ex-
amination of Dr. TAYLOR'S KEY to the
EPISTLES. *67-138*
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- IV. The LAW of NATURE sufficiently
promulgated to the HEATHENS. *200-241*
- V. An Attempt to promote the frequent
dispensing the LORD'S SUPPER. *242-311*

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By JOHN ERSKINE, M.A.
One of the MINISTERS of EDINBURGH.

L O N D O N:
Printed for EDWARD and CHARLES DILLY,
in the Poultry, near the Mansion-House.

MDCCLXV.

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CONTAINING

- I. The Nature of the SINAI COVENANT.
- II. The Character and Privileges of the Apostolic Churches, with an Examination of Dr. Aylmer's Key to the Epistles.
- III. The Nature of the New Covenant.
- IV. The Nature of the Church of Christ, as distinguished from the Heathen.
- V. An Attempt to promote the improvement of the mind, and the cultivation of the heart, by the study of the Scriptures.

By JOHN ERSKINE, M.A.
One of the Ministers of Edinburgh.
LONDON:
Printed for Edwards and Child, in Strand, near the Mansion House.
1797.



T H E
P R E F A C E.

THE three first of the following Dissertations were never before published. The two last, were printed in Scotland, several years ago.

I flatter myself, they somewhat illustrate the sentiments of Heathen Philosophers; and the doctrine and worship that have prevailed in different ages of the Christian Church. But they are chiefly intended to explain and defend certain Scriptural Truths, of which I apprehend many entertain false, or at least indistinct ideas;

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and yet, which could not have been sufficiently unfolded from the Pulpit, without usurping the place of what was more necessary.

If I have found fault, with certain commonly received opinions, it is not from affectation of singularity. The growing disposition in Britain and her Colonies, to renounce many important doctrines maintained by the first Reformers, indicates an approaching Apostacy from the Faith of Christ to another Gospel. Yet, in lesser matters, the best and wisest have erred, and it casts no contempt on their memory, but discovers a becoming reverence for the Sacred Oracles, to try their opinions by that infallible touchstone.

I suppose, it is above thirteen years, since a great part of the Dissertation on the Sinai Covenant, was delivered before the Presbytery of Glasgow. And it is near sixteen years, since the substance of the Dissertation on Faith, was preached before the late Earl of Leven, his Majesty's High Commissioner to the General Assembly. I thought it probable, if my sentiments were

unsound,

unsound, on my reasonings weak and inconclusive, that one or other of the many Ministers, who heard me on these occasions, would point it out. That not happening, encourages me now, after so long delay, to venture abroad these sheets. Conscious, how liable I am to judge amiss, I remain open to conviction. If I am chargeable with error, at least I am not chargeable with dark and artful methods to disguise and varnish it over, by saying one thing, when I mean to insinuate quite another.

That Christ, and the benefits of Redemption, were typified by the Law of Moses; and that the spiritual sense of Moses's Law, though veiled from the Jews in common, was in some measure revealed to those mentioned, Heb. vi. I firmly believe. I doubt not, there were many more, whose eyes were opened, under that dark dispensation, to behold wonderful things out of God's Law. Who they were, or how many, Scripture has not determined, and it would be presumptuous to conjecture.

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with P R E F A C E

I acknowledge, that hypocrites, whose hypocrisy is unknown, ought to be treated as members of the Christian Church.——I account that faith only saving, which is accompanied with an approbation of the Gospel Scheme of Salvation in all its parts, which leads us to come to God thro' Christ for pardoning mercy and sanctifying grace, which purifies the heart from immoderate love of the world, and produces an unfeigned respect to all God's Commandments.——I think a divine revelation absolutely necessary, to discover how guilty creatures may emerge from the ruins of their apostacy.——Yet, I cannot see, that confounding faith with its inseparable attendants, or necessary effects, is consistent with the important doctrine of justification by faith only. And infidels, I apprehend, may be greatly hardened in their infidelity, by Christian Divines placing the necessity of revelation on a feeble foundation; while they argue from a fact, which Scripture and Reason concur in contradicting, even this, that the law of nature was not sufficiently promulgated to the Heathens. O-

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P R E F A C E ix

thers, who discern not the inconclusiveness of that argument, may be led to forget the grand design of the Gospel, and to mistake it for a re-publication of nature's law.

If my notions of the Jewish and Christian dispensations are just, I gratefully acknowledge, I was first led to them by Bishop Warburton's Divine Legation, and Professor Venema's Dissertations printed at Harlingen 1731. To these learned Writers I would have inscribed the following sheets, was it not, that it might have seemed a pleading their great Names in Patronage of what I have wrote. That I could not justly do. In some particulars I have differed from them. Probably I may have advanced interpretations of Scripture, and improved my sentiments for purposes, which neither of them would chuse to adopt. And had it been otherwise, Reason and Scripture, not human authority, must determine the question, what is Truth.

Attention to Scripture suggested to me the idea of Faith in the third Dissertation. I can cite no uninspired book in support

P R E F A C E

port of it. The late President Edwards, in his excellent Treatise on Religious Affections, and some other writers, have indeed laid down principles, from which it may, in my apprehension, be fairly inferred. Yet their ideas of the nature of faith, are so different from mine, that certainly they discerned not that inference. The careless Reader may imagine me favourable to Mr. Sandiman's Hypothesis. But a little reflection will discover a very considerable difference in our sentiments. Mean time, his mistakes about faith are much less offensive, than his discouraging unconverted sinners from using the means of grace in order to conversion, and his harshly censuring Divines as teaching a smooth way to hell, who have clearly asserted those truths, the right belief of which constitutes men Christians.

The general argument of the fourth Dissertation appears to me in the same light, as it did three and twenty years ago, when I first published it. But since that time, I have been fully convinced, that many of the most celebrated Philosophers entertained

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sentiments absolutely inconsistent with the belief of the soul's immortality, and of future rewards and punishments: and have seen considerable cause to suspect that under the devout expressions of the Stoic Philosophers, a system was disguised, nearly allied to that of Spinoza.

I am sorry my distance from the press has occasioned so many typographical errors. Most of them, I hope, will give little disturbance to the attentive and judicious. But I earnestly intreat, that the Reader would at least correct the error in p. 137, which divests my argument of all force, nay makes me assert the very reverse, of what I intended.

EDINBURGH,

Sept. 1. 1764.

E R.

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- Page 8. line 15. for woman read man
 10. l. 10. for ¹ read :
11. l. 3. from the bottom, for accepting read exception
 12. Notes, l. 1. for xiii. read xxi.
 46. l. 2. for ¹ read 2
 49. l. 2. from the bottom, for promises read premisses
 — Note, for East read East, and for Desit read Vase
 54. Note, dele and 5. e. g.
 73. l. 12. from the bottom, for 13, 66. read 13. lxx.
 80. Notes, l. 3. for 18 read 16
 82. Notes, l. 2. for Tim. xii. read Tim. iii. 12.
 84. l. 4. from the bottom, for or read on
 95. Notes, l. 1. for Milevitonus read Milevitanus
 96. Notes, l. 5. for 47 read 71
 97. l. 13. from the bottom, for fecit read facit.
 99. Notes, l. 2. for Apul. read Apol.
 — l. 3. for Maynes read Magnes
 100. l. 12. and 13. from the bottom, for imparata read imparatus
 101. l. 3. for lati read loti
 — Notes, l. 1. for Penitentia read Poenitentia — Ibid. l. 6. for
 — Eliberitoni read Eliberitani
 103. l. 9. after But then, add when the Roman Emperors em-
 braced Christianity,
 122. l. 17. for grace to them; he read grade, to them he
 124. l. 5. from the bottom, for ³ read .
 127. l. 11. from the bottom, for said read are said
 129. l. 11. from the bottom, for δινασορν read δινασορν — and
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 130. l. 18. for John read James
 135. l. 21. for bribe read gift
 137. l. 11. from the bottom, for antecedent read consequent
 138. l. 5. from the bottom, for was read were.
 177. l. 2. from the bottom, for revelation read salvation
 180. l. 11. for this read his
 183. l. 5. from the bottom, for manifested read magnified
 194. l. 10. for A persuasion of future misery read Dread of
 threatned punishment
 194. l. 11. for . read : and dele But
 227. l. 2. for ; but read . But
 236. l. 7. for ; but read . But
 239. l. 14. from the bottom, for nature read water.
 270. l. 14. for greatly read generally — and for last year read year
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THEOLOGICAL DISSERTATIONS.

DISSERTATION I.

*The Nature of the Sinai Covenant, and
the Character and Privileges of the
Jewish Church.*

SECTION I.

§ 1. **T**HE most transient view of the sacred oracles, may convince an impartial enquirer, that the nature and privileges of the Jewish and Christian churches are very different. But to determine how far they are different, is more difficult.

To Israel pertained the covenants, Rom. ix. 4. Not the covenant of grace only, but another, expressly distinguished from it, Jer. xxxi. 31. Heb. viii. 9. Ezek. xvi. 61. in virtue of which, many destitute of inward piety, and no way interested in the covenant of grace, yet had a just

title to another kind of covenant blessings. A covenant compared, Gal. iv. 22.—24. to Hagar the bond-woman, whose son was excluded a share in the inheritance, cast out of Abraham's family, and obliged to content himself with a servile portion: to intimate that Israel, after the flesh, has no title to the spiritual inheritance, and when the true heir should enter on possession of that inheritance, was to be cast out of God's family.

The opposite nature of the Sinai and Christian covenant, is directly asserted, Heb. viii. 8, 9. "For finding fault with them, he saith, behold the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day, when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt."

The promise referred to in this passage, cannot relate to the time when the Jews returned from the Babylonish captivity. For no new covenant was made with them at that period. It is therefore justly applied by the Apostle to the Christian covenant, which was indeed *new*, not barely in certain accidental circumstances, but in its very essence, so that upon establishing it, the former covenant could no more remain. *Not according to the covenant which I made with their fathers.* The Mosaic and Christian covenants are represented as of a nature and properties entirely different. So strong an expression would scarcely have been used, if in the Christian covenant, what was most peculiar to the Mosaic, and characteristic of it, had remained unaltered. The dispensation of grace, which took place under the Mosaic covenant, was no part of it, did not extend

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extend to all who were, and did extend to some who were not under it. Therefore a resemblance of that dispensation of grace in what was essential, will not infer a resemblance of the covenant made with the fathers of the Jews. Least by *fathers*, we should understand, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, it is added, *in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt*. A manifest description of the Sinai or Mosaic covenant, in which God, as monarch of the Jewish nation, promised them a long and prosperous possession of Canaan, on condition of their external obedience, to a variety of laws, precepts, and judgments.

Of this covenant we have the history in the 19th and following chapters of Exodus, and in the 5th chapter of Deuteronomy. It was not dedicated without blood, Exod. xxiv. Heb. ix. 19. and, in establishing it, there was a typical Mediator, even Moses, Gal. iii. 19. The condition of it was obeying, not only the laws promulgated on that memorable day, when God descended upon Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people, but a variety of burdensome ritual precepts afterwards enacted to punish the idolatry of the golden calf, Heb. viii. 9. Gal. iii. 19; to preserve from the corrupt religion and profligate manners of neighbouring nations; and to typify better things to come under the Messias. In the mean time, these laws, though wisely calculated to restrain from idolatry and other gross sins, could not make perfect as pertaining to the conscience. Obedience to them was never designed to entitle to heavenly and spiritual blessings. These last are only to be looked for through an-
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other and a better covenant, established upon better promises.

If any enquire whether the Mosaic covenant was a covenant of works or of grace; I reply, it was neither, in the sense in which systematic divines, generally use these terms: but a mixed covenant, partaking of the nature of both. God's loving the Jews above other nations, taking them into covenant with himself, and appointing sacrifices to expiate sins which would otherwise have been a breach of this covenant, were all owing to free unmerited goodness. Not to observe that the Mosaic covenant had a respect to the covenant of grace as typified by it. But then the burdensome servile obedience it enjoined, was to be performed by the Jews without any special divine assistance, and was to found their legal title to covenant blessings.

temple.

But without regarding systematic ideas, let us examine the Scripture account of the Mosaic covenant, and particularly of the parties covenanting, the good things promised, and the condition on which the bestowing them was suspended.

§ 2. That God was one of the parties, in the Mosaic covenant, is universally acknowledged. It is, however, necessary to observe, that God entered into that covenant, under the character of King of Israel. He is termed so in Scripture: (a) and he acted as such, disposed of offices, made war and peace, exacted tribute, enacted laws, punished with death such of that people as refused him allegiance and defended his subjects from their enemies.

God, as husband of the gospel church, claims from his people inward affection and love, and

(a) Judg. viii. 23. 1 Sam. viii. 7. xii. 12.

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accepts them only who worship him in spirit and in truth. In the Mosaic covenant it was otherwise. There he appeared chiefly as a temporal prince, and therefore gave laws intended rather to direct the outward conduct, than to regulate the actings of the heart. Hence every thing in that dispensation was adapted to strike his subjects with awe and reverence. The magnificence of his palace, and all its utensils; his numerous train of attendants; the splendid robes of the high priest, who, though his prime minister, was not allowed to enter the holy of holies, save once a year, and, in all his ministrations, was obliged to discover the most humble veneration for Israel's king; the solemn rites, with which the priests were consecrated; the strictness with which all impurities and indecencies were forbidden, as things, which, though tolerable in others (b), were unbecoming the dignity of the people of God (c), especially when approaching to him: all these tended to promote and secure the respect due to their glorious sovereign. On the same account, a distinction was preserved between the table of the prince and of the subjects. The subjects were not allowed to eat the fat and the blood (d), these being proper to God's altar, and leaven and honey, the common food of the Israelites, though consecrated to God, were not to be burnt on the altar, but eaten by the priests.

The sabbath, the feasts of passover, pentecost and tabernacles, the preserving the pot of manna, and Aaron's rod that blossomed, and the consecration of the first-born to God, were all commemorations of outward benefits, received from

(b) Deut. xiv. 21. (c) Levit. xi. 43, 44. Deut. xiv. 1, — 3. xxiii. 10, — 14. (d) Lev. iii. 17. (e)

the exercise of God's kingly power. The tithes were properly tribute paid him. Their thank-offerings of beasts, wheat, barley, wine, oil, &c. were acknowledgments that they owed these blessings to his bounty. To conclude this argument, the fidelity and allegiance of the Jews was secured, not by bestowing the influences of the spirit necessary to produce faith and love, (a) but barely by external displays of majesty and greatness, calculated to promote a slavish subjection, rather than a cheerful filial obedience.

For this reason it is foretold, Hof. ii. 16. that in gospel times men should not call God Baali, i. e. my master, but Ithi, i. e. my husband. Indeed God was a husband to the Jewish church, (b) and he is to the Christian church a Master and Lord (c). But the passage imports at least thus much, that God, who in the Jewish dispensation had chiefly displayed the grandeur, distance, and severity of a Master, would, in the Christian dispensation, chiefly display the affection and familiarity of a husband and friend.

§ 3. The party, with whom God made this covenant, was the Jewish nation, not excluding these unregenerate, and inwardly disaffected to God and goodness. In the original records of the Sinai covenant (d), all the people are expressly said to enter into it, and yet the greater part of that people, were strangers to the enlightening and converting influences of the spirit, and to a principle of inward love to God and holiness (e). The least acquaintance with the history of the Jews, and even of that genera-

(a) Deut. xxix. 3, 4. (b) Jer. xxxi. 32. (c) Mat. xxiii. 9. (d) Exod. xix. 8. xxiv. 3. Deut. v. 1, —3. (e) Deut. xxix. 3. v. 29.

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tion, which came out of Egypt, and with whom the Sinai covenant was first established (a), may satisfy us, how rare a thing true religion was among them. Indeed, had they been blessed with deliverance from the dominion of sin, and with conformity to the image of God, it would be absolutely unaccountable, that when urged to obedience, this more excellent blessing should be wholly overlooked; and their deliverance from Egypt represented as the chief thing, whereby God had become their God, and laid them under obligations to walk in his statutes (b).

On account of the perverse obstinate disposition of God's antient covenant people, Hoseah is commanded, to take unto him a wife of whoredoms, i. e. one, who, though then a virgin, was of a lascivious disposition, and would break her marriage vow: and to love a woman, beloved of her friend, yet an adulteress, i. e. one who would repay her husband's fondness and affection with adulterous treachery (c). For the same reason, the Sinai covenant is compared to a prison (d), in which subjects disaffected to their prince, are shut up to prevent their rebelling, and to a school-master (e), by whose authority children are restrained from sins and follies, to which their natural disposition would otherwise carry them. And those under the Sinai covenant, are represented as groaning under a yoke (f).

(a) Jer. xxxi. 32. Ezek. xx. 10, 11. (b) Ex. xix. 4. xx. 2. xxix. 46. Lev. xi. 45. xix. 36. xxii. 33. xxv. 38, 42, 55. Numb. xv. 41. Deut. iv. 20, 34. 2 Sam. vii. 23. Hos. xii. 9. (c) Hos. i. 2. iii. 1. (d) Gal. iii. 23. (e) Ibid. ver. 24. (f) Is. ix. 3. lii. 2.

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Further, the Sinai covenant was made, not only with those who came out of Egypt, but with all succeeding generations that were to spring from them (a). Descent from Israel gave any one a title to the benefits of this covenant, for which reason the children even of unregenerate Israelites, were circumcised the eighth day, and were said to be born unto God (b). It was this that led the Jews, in our Lord's days, to boast so much of their descent from Abraham (c). And probably it was to allay this pride in Nicodemus, that our Lord tells him he must be born again; as he speaks of the water of life to the Samaritan woman who boasted of Jacob's well; and to the rich young woman of treasures in heaven. Hence Paul tells us, that he had, *whereof he might trust in the flesh*, i. e. esteemed himself entitled to the carnal benefits of the Sinai covenant, seeing he was *of the stock of Israel*, and *an Hebrew of the Hebrews* (d). Now this plainly supposes, that all of the stock of Israel were interested in that covenant. Nay, these adopted by a Jew, born in his house, or bought with his money, were circumcised, as a token that they were entitled to the same benefits (e). Profelytes too, in virtue of their own deed, had the same claim: and the children of profelytes, though circumcised at an age, when incapable of knowing what was done to them, had a like claim through the deed and will of their parents. Sons of God under that typical dispensation were *born of blood*, i. e. lawful wedlock; or *of the will of the flesh*, i. e. of uncleanness, as Pharez from the

(a) Deut. xxix. 14, 15. (b) Ezek. xvi. 20. (c) Mat. iii. 9. John viii. 33. (d) Phil. iii. 4, 5. (e) Gen. xviii. 12, 13. Selden de Jur. Nat. & Gent. l. 5. c. 12.

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incest of Judah and Tamar; or from the will of men, i. e. became sons of God, by their own deed, or by the deed of their parents, masters or adopters. The difference of the Christian dispensation from the Sinai covenant, in these respects, is hinted, John i. 13. and 1 Peter ii. 23. and in that celebrated expression of Tertullian, *Christiani sunt, non nascuntur*. It needs no proof, that men might be interested in the blessings of the Sinai covenant, in any of the ways mentioned above, and yet notwithstanding be slaves of Satan, and dead in trespasses and sins.

When God promised the land of Canaan to Abraham and his seed, circumcision was instituted for this among other purposes, to shew that descent from Abraham was the foundation of his posterities right to these blessings. But, in gospel times, when not the children of the flesh, but the children of the promise are counted for a seed, Rom. ix. 8. in consequence of this the circumcision of the flesh is of no more avail, and the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ becomes necessary, Col. iii. 10. Rom. ii. 28. The promise of long life, to the land of Canaan, was therefore annexed with peculiar propriety to the precept of honouring father and mother, to remind the Jews that they owed the possession of that land to the piety of their more distant forefathers, gratitude to whom would be best testified by a dutiful behaviour to their immediate parents who now represented them.

Had not God known, that the greater part of these, with whom he entered into covenant at Sinai, were an obstinate, stiff-necked, and hard-

hearted generation, there would have been no occasion for permitting polygamy and divorce, and allowing the avenger of blood to kill the manslayer. These laws evidently suppose their corruption, and connive at it, in so far as to free it from temporal punishment.

The spiritual covenant-relation, between God and true believers, can never be dissolved (*a*). These then interested in the Sinai covenant were not true believers! for they are charged with spiritual whoredom and adultery, and with breaking the covenant like Adam (*b*), and God is said to give them a bill of divorce, and put them away (*c*).

§ 4. But it will more clearly appear, who were interested in the Sinai covenant, by considering, who were allowed to partake of the seals of it. Now circumcision belonging to all the Jews in common, the Sinai covenant, of which it was a seal, must belong to them too. Circumcision, I acknowledge was also a seal of the righteousness of faith. But it was not so to all who received it. As derived from Abraham, it was to all who imitated his faith a seal of the covenant of grace: as inserted in the ceremonial law a seal of the Sinai covenant. Or rather, it was to Abraham, a seal both of an external and spiritual covenant. And therefore, even to these, who were only interested in the external covenant, it was of use.

As all the seed of Jacob were circumcised, so none of them were excluded for want of inward holiness, from the passover and other federal

(*a*) Jer. xxxi. 32, 33. xxxii. 40. Is. lv. 3. (*b*) Jer. xxxi. 32. Hos. vi. 7. (*c*) Isa. l. 1, 2. Jer. iii. 8. Hos. ix. 15.

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rites of the Jewish church. Bad men might therefore be then in covenant with God: for God would not have permitted any, to partake of the seals of a covenant, in which they were no ways interested. Every one that was not ceremonially unclean, or on a journey, and forebore to keep the passover, was to be cut off by death from God's people (a). Depravity of heart, or wickedness of life, did not exempt from this obligation. And even these, who being unclean by reason of a dead body, or in a journey afar off, could not solemnize the passover on the fourteenth day of the first month, were required to do it, on the fourteenth day of the second month. So that, on one or other of these days, every Israelite whatsoever was bound to solemnize it. And therefore, though Christ had told his disciples, that one of their number had a devil, they don't desire him to point out the guilty person, which, doubtless, they would have done, had an immoral character, as much unfitted, as ceremonial uncleanness for eating the passover.

Three times a year, even at the feasts of unleavened bread, of harvest, and of ingathering, all the males of Israel, were required to appear before the Lord (b). The Jewish Rabbies mention eleven classes of persons, whom this precept did not bind, as the blind, lame, &c. but instead of excepting men of wicked hearts and lives, they expressly tell us, that all, save these eleven classes, were bound by that precept (c).

Every seventh year, at the feast of tabernacles, all Israel, man, woman, and child, were bound .

(a) Num. ix. 13.

(b) Maimonides tit. Chagigah, c. 2. apud Selden de Synedr. Vet. Heb. l. 1. c. 7.

(c) Ibid.

to appear before the Lord (a). And the Jewish doctors, do not except from this precept excommunicate or immoral persons (b).

Agreeably to this, we nowhere read, that either prince, or priest, or prophet, excluded any person on account of moral pollution, from sacrifices, from the passover, or from other sacerdotal rites and solemnities. Nay, Josiah, that pious prince, commanded all the people in common to keep the passover to the Lord God (c), though he knew too much of their idolatries and other wickednesses in the reign of his predecessor, to imagine that the hearts of all his subjects were right with God, and sincerely devoted to his service. No rebukes however are given to the princes or priests on that account, in the writings of the prophets, which doubtless would have been done, had their conduct in this particular been blame-worthy. But the prophets well knew, that man could have no right to preclude any from that, which the law of God allowed them, I should rather have said, under the severest penalties enjoined upon them.

The Sadducees were men of the most dangerous principles and abandoned lives. Yet they were allowed to sacrifice and partake of the passover. Nay, some of them were advanced to the high priesthood. The Pharisees, their mortal enemies, saw this, without ever opposing it as unlawful. So sensible were they, that the law of Moses afforded them no handle for such an opposition.

(a) Dent. xiii. 10, — 12. (b) Maimonides tit. Chagiga, c. 3. apud Selden, l. c. (c) 2 Kings xxiii. 21.

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The Pharisees were mightily offended at our Lord, for eating and drinking with publicans and sinners, and would have esteemed themselves blame-worthy, had they done it (a). Yet the self-righteous Pharisee and immoral Publican go together to the temple-worship, and the former does not look upon himself as defiled by the presence of the latter (b). Persons ceremonially impure polluted any garment they touched, or any place they entered. Moral impurity had no such effect, else adulteresses would not have been brought into a place so holy as the temple (c).

Our Lord and his apostles were accounted, both by Pharisees and Saducees, as the vilest of men, the filth of the earth, and the off-scourings of all things. Yet no attempt was made to debar them from the sacrifices or sacraments of the Jewish church. Doubtless, the malice of their enemies would have prompted them to have inflicted that censure, had it been ever inflicted for error or vice. But they, who blamed our Lord for eating with unwashed hands, did not blame him for entering the temple, and partaking of the passover. And they who were angry with Paul, for bringing Greeks into the temple, express no displeasure at him for entering it himself.

Our Lord, who knew the unbelief of his brethren, and their worldly carnal disposition, would not have bid them go up to the feast of tabernacles, John vii. 5.—8. if the obligation to attend that solemnity, had reached only to the regenerate.

Hezekiah's not observing the passover the first month, because the priests had not sanctified

(a) Mat. ix. 11. (b) Luke xviii. 10. (c) Num. v. John viii. 2, 3.

themselves sufficiently (a), is no proof that inward holiness was necessary to qualify for that solemnity. For sanctified, in that history, means no more than free from ceremonial uncleanness, which many bad men might, and many good men might not be.

It is readily acknowledged, that men of bad lives, at least after the return from the Babylonish captivity, were excommunicated and thrust out of the synagogues. But it should be remembered, these synagogues were only private societies of a late original, and persons thrust out of them still had access to the temple-worship. Excommunication precluded men from certain private devotional exercises, and from free and familiar intercourse with their brethren. It deprived of certain marks of honour and respect, and probably was attended with something of positive disgrace. And therefore, some of the chief rulers were afraid to confess Christ, lest they should be put out of the synagogue, because they loved the praise of men, more than the praise of God (b). One circumstance of disgrace was, that excommunicate persons entered the temple, and went out of it, at a different gate from others. Yet still they had an undoubted right to sacrifice and partake of the passover, just as the Essenes had, who sacrificed in a part of the temple separate from the rest of the Jews (c). Whatever therefore were the effects of excommunication, exclusion from any public exercise of worship, could be none of them. The history of our Lord and his apostles is a demonstration of this. The Jews had decreed to excommunicate any who should confess Jesus to be the Christ (d).

(a) 2 Chron. xxx. 3.
(c) Selden ubi supra.

(b) John xii. 42, 43.
(d) John ix. 22.

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They passed that sentence against the blind man whose sight Christ had restored (a), and doubtless against many, if not all others in like circumstances. For Christ warns his disciples to expect this sentence (b), and the fear of it prevented many from professing their faith in him (c). Yet all this notwithstanding, the apostles of Christ, and thousands of believing Jews zealous of the law (d), had as free access to the temple for public exercises of devotion, as the infidel Jews had (e). Nor did their bitterest enemies ever accuse them, or contend with them on that account, which they would undoubtedly have done, if excommunication had deprived them of all title to the public solemnities of the Jewish worship.

§ 5. But, if this reasoning proves any thing, will it not prove, that a God of spotless purity, can enter into a friendly treaty with men, whom yet, on account of their sins, he utterly abhors? And what if it does? Perhaps, the assertion, however shocking at first view, may, on a narrower scrutiny, be found innocent. We assert not any inward eternal friendship between God and the unconverted Jews. We only assert an external temporal covenant, which, though it secured their outward prosperity, gave them no claim to God's special favour. Where then is the alledged absurdity? Will you say it is unworthy of God to maintain external communion with sinners, or to impart to them any blessings? What then would become of the bulk of mankind? Nay, what would become of the patience

(a) John ix. 34. (b) Jo. xvi. 2. (c) Jo. xii. 42. (d) Acts xxi. 20. (e) Acts ii. 46. xxi. 26.

and long-suffering of God? Or is it absurd, that God should reward actions that flow from bad motives: when we have an undoubted instance of his doing this in the case of Jehu? Or is it absurd, that God should entail favours on bad men, in the way of promise or covenant? Have you forgot God's promise to Jehu, that his children of the fourth generation should sit on the throne of Israel? Or, have you forgot, what concerns you more, God's covenant with mankind in general, no more to destroy the earth by a flood (*a*)? I would only add, that the spiritual promise made to Abraham, was not made void by the Sinai covenant (*b*). If the greater part did not secure an interest in that promise, the fault was their own. God, notwithstanding, for his love to their fathers, and for other wise and good reasons, allowed them the benefit of the external covenant. If you plead, that God can have no intercourse with sinners without sacrifices and without a Mediator: I reply, the Sinai covenant was founded on sacrifices (*c*), and had a Mediator, even Moses (*d*). And in an outward and typical covenant securing temporal prosperity, so great a display of the divine holiness was not necessary, as in a covenant securing an interest in God's special loving-kindness. Therefore a Mediator and sacrifices of less value sufficed for the former. A typical Mediator and typical sacrifices, were most suitable to a typical covenant.

§ 6. But why were those, with whom God entered into covenant at mount Sinai, so often

(*a*) 2 Kings x. 30. Gen. ix. 12.
17. (*c*) Heb. ix. 18,—20.

(*b*) Gal. iii.
(*d*) Gal. iii. 19.

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termed a holy people to the Lord, if the greater part of them were in heart disaffected to God and his service? The question is not without it's difficulty, and the answering it will require some time and pains. Let it then be observed, that men are said to be sanctified or made holy in very different senses. Sanctification, for the distinction, though an old is not a bad one, is either real or relative. Real sanctification is either inward, consisting of holiness of heart and life, or outward, consisting in external washings and purifications, and a behaviour free from grosser sins. Relative sanctification consists, in separation from common use, and a special relation to God, and spiritual things: to God, when any thing is used as an external symbol of his presence, or is employed in his immediate service; or in some use to which God has devoted it; to spiritual things, when something not spiritual is a type and figure of them. On this account, that also is termed unclean, which is a type or emblem of moral impurities (*a*).

Though then the unconverted Jews, had not that holiness, which results from moral excellency, or from the graces of the spirit: yet they had a holiness, consisting in separation from other nations (*b*); in legal washings and purifications, and abstinence from whatever ceremonially defiled (*c*); in freedom from idolatry, and other gross vices, absolutely destructive to a society, of which God was king (*d*); in external dedication to God and his service, and the outward symbols of God's presence among them (*e*); and in their typifying the

(*a*) Mede Diff. 1. c. 5. (*b*) Ezra ix. 2. (*c*) Exod. xxii. 31. Lev. xi. 43, 44. xx. 25, 26. Deut. xiv. 1, —3. (*d*) Lev. xx. 6, 7. (*e*) Exod. xxix. 43, 44.

Messias and his kingdom, and preparing things for his birth and appearance.

The holiness of the priests was barely external and relative. Inward impurities did not unfit them for their office (*a*). The same might be observed as to the holiness of the Levites, of the first-born, and of the Nazarites. Therefore, the holiness of the Jewish nation, which was inferior in degree to the holiness of these, is external and relative also. To intimate this, the Israelites are termed a kingdom of priests, as well as a holy nation (*b*). And indeed, in killing the paschal lamb, every head of a family acted as a priest.

That separation from other nations, in which the holiness of the Jews chiefly consisted (*c*), was not spiritual, resulting from rectitude of heart and a correspondent behaviour; but barely external, resulting from certain sacred rites and ceremonies different from or opposite to those of other nations, and confined to certain places and persons (*d*). The middle wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles, was the ceremonial law (*e*), which was neither necessary nor fit to make a spiritual separation. In fact, it did not separate between good and bad men among the Jews: but between the house of Israel, and the fearers of God or devout persons in the heathen nations (*f*). For which reason, though Cornelius was one that feared God, gave much alms, and prayed to God always, Peter was afraid of being polluted by intercourse with him.

- (*a*) Lev. xxi. 5, 6. Num. xxiii. 9. (*b*) Exod. xix. 18, 19. (*c*) Exod. xix. 18, 19. (*d*) Lev. xx. 24, 26. Deut. xiv. 21. (*e*) Eph. ii. 14, 15. (*f*) Psal. cxviii. 4. Acts xiii. 16, 26. xvii. 4, 17.

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A particular detail of the reasons, of these ceremonial observances, whereby Israel was separated from other nations, would lead me too far from my subject. Some of them were intended, as has been observed § 2, to preserve the respect due to God as King of the Jews. Others, to prepare things for the coming of the Messias, and to keep that nation and family from which he was to descend distinct from all others, that so it might be evident, he was born of the tribe and family, and in the place, which the Old Testament prophecies had foretold. For this purpose the Jews were forbid to intermarry with the heathen (*a*): the jubilee was instituted, at which time every family had its old inheritance restored to it, genealogies were kept with great exactness to preserve the distinction of tribes and families: adultery, and other vices, that tended to confound that distinction, were severely punished: and because the genealogies of the royal family used to be most accurately observed, the royalty was annexed to the particular tribe and family, from which the Messias was to arise.—Other ritual laws were intended to promote the real external sanctification of the Israelites; to train them up to decency of behaviour; to preserve them from idolatry and other gross vices of the heathen, destructive of society in general, or inconsistent with their owning God as their Prince, and to inure them to humanity and other social virtues. This is expressly mentioned as the cause of some laws (*b*), and, in other laws, it is evident from the reason of the thing. Thus the prohibitions of sowing a field with mingled seed,

(*a*) Ezra ix. 10. Neh. xiii. 25. (*b*) Lev. xviii. 3, 24. Numb. xv. 39. Deut. xii. 2. xiv. 1, 2.

and wearing garments mingled with linen and woolen (a), though they were to be observed in the literal sense, seem mainly intended to discourage the joining the worship of idols with the worship of the true God, the intermarrying with heathens, and, above all, unnatural ways of gratifying lust. The seething a kid in his mother's milk (b), the killing a cow or ewe and their young in one day (c), and the taking the dam and her young at once (d), were forbid in order to encourage mercy and humanity. And therefore the last of these precepts is backed with this reason, that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days (e). The moral intention of the precept against muzzling the ox that treadeth out the corn (f), is pointed out by Paul, 2 Cor. ix. 9, 10. The forbidding the price of a dog to be brought into the house of the Lord, was probably intended to discourage impudence and uncleanliness, as it is at the same time forbidden to bring there the hire of a whore (g).—Some laws might be necessary, in the climate where Judea lay, to preserve cleanliness, and thereby the health of the inhabitants.—In some rites God might accommodate himself, as far as was fit, to the dispositions and inclinations of his subjects, by adopting into the Jewish ritual, ceremonies to which they had been accustomed, and for which they had contracted a fondness, when in Egypt. At the same time, that the admitting among them some ceremonies of this kind, might not facilitate the entrance of idolatry, a variety

(a) Lev. xix. 19. Deut. xxii. 9.—(b) Exod. xiii. 19. (c) Lev. xxii. 28. (d) Deut. xxii. 6, 7. (e) Ibid. (f) Deut. xxv. 4. (g) Deut. xxiii. 18.

of rites were wisely prescribed, diametrically opposite to these of Egypt and other idolatrous nations.—As things difficultly obtained are most valued and desired, it is not improbable, that the reason why such a multitude of legal pollutions, unfitted for the service of the temple, might be, to increase the reverence and affection of the Jews for that service.—Lastly, almost every part of the ceremonial law, besides its other purposes, was intended to typify either the Messias, or the characters of the subjects of his kingdom, or the blessings of the Christian dispensation. And here I cannot forbear transcribing an observation of the learned Bishop Warburton's *Divine Legation*, B. 4. Section 6. “An institution of a body of
“rites, particularly and minutely levelled against,
“and referring to the idolatrous practices of those
“ages; and, at the same time, as minutely typical,
“not only of all the remarkable transactions under that dispensation, but likewise of
“all the great and constituent parts of a future
“one, to arise in a distant age, and of a genius
“directly opposite, must needs give an attentive
“considerer the most amazing idea of divine
“wisdom.”

And thus I am brought back to my subject, and led to observe, that as things were termed unclean, which were types or emblems of moral impurity, so the Jews were termed holy, not only because they were separated from other nations, but because they typified real Christians, who are in the fullest and noblest sense a holy nation, and a peculiar people (a). Types are visible things, different in their nature, from the spiritual things which they typify. If then the Jew-

(a) 1 Pet. ii. 9.

ish dispensation was typical, we may safely conclude, that the holiness of the Jewish nation being intended to typify the holiness of the Christian church, was of a different nature from it. And it is for this reason, that the Jewish dispensation is called the flesh and the letter, because persons and things in that dispensation, typified and represented persons and things under a more spiritual dispensation.

SECTION II.

§ 1. **I**T is easy to see, from what has been observed in the preceeding section, that the blessings of the Sinai covenant are merely temporal and outward.

God in that covenant acted as a temporal monarch. And from a temporal monarch, temporal prosperity is all that we hope, not spiritual blessings, such as righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.

The Jews were treated in that covenant as children and slaves, Gal. iv. 1, 24. v. 1. Rom. viii. 15. Heb. ii. 15. Imaginary blessings are well adapted to please children, and the expectations of a slave reach not to intimate friendship with his master, but are confined to a paltry hire.

We are informed, Luke xvii. 7,—10. how God deals with a hired servant. Though he performs the servile work for which he was hired, he is not to look for any mark of affection and respect from his master, seeing it was only for hire that he served him. A fit emblem of the Sinai covenant, in which the Jews were hired by the prosperous possession of the land of Canaan, to perform

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perform a variety of slavish, burdensome services. If they did the work, they were only to expect the wages. They had no claim to special intercourse with God, and the peculiar tokens of his favour, seeing they were destitute of faith, the necessity of which our Lord had asserted, ver. 6. and introduced this similitude to illustrate. After having done all the things commanded them, as they merit no reward, so they don't receive it. They are unprofitable servants, and are treated as such. Their Master saith not to them, go sit down to meat: but make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself and serve me. How different a representation do the sacred oracles give of the honour and happiness of true Christians? Though none of them ever did the thousandth part of his duty; and though the best of them could not be profitable to their Maker: yet their good works are represented as glorifying to God, profitable to society, and useful to themselves (a). God calls them not servants, as the Jews were called, but sons and friends (b). And, when their work is over, instead of sitting down at table, and commanding them to serve him, such is his boundless condescension and love, that he girds himself, makes them to sit down at meat, and comes forth and serves them (c).

If any plead, that our Lord's similitude of a hired servant refers to the law of nature: I acknowledge, that by the law of nature, one who perfectly loves God, and obeys his commands, and has never in the least instance, by thought, word or action, transgressed any of them, has no

(a) Matth. x. 41, 42. Ephes. vi. 8. Phil. i. 11. Philem. xi. (b) John xv. 15. Gal. iv. 7. (c) Luke xii. 37.

claim to the heavenly inheritance, from the intrinsic merit of his obedience. However, from the goodness of God, and his love to holiness, we have no reason to doubt, that upon such a one the heavenly inheritance would be bestowed. Neither the law of nature, nor the covenant of grace, but the Sinai covenant alone, placed men in the relation of mercenary slaves.

On this account, the prophet Hoseah's wife, who represented those under the Sinai covenant, was bought with fifteen pieces of silver, and an homer of barley, and an half homer of barley (a). And the elder brother, in the parable of the prodigal, who also represents the Jewish church, had none of those marks of special affection given him, that were vouchsafed to the returning prodigal (b).

§ 2. But it is proper to mention some more direct and unquestionable proofs, that the blessings of the Sinai covenant were merely outward.

Israel's deliverance from Egypt, which was as it were the foundation of the Sinai covenant, was only an outward redemption. Is it then reasonable to suppose, that the blessings founded upon it were spiritual and heavenly?

Read attentively, and without prejudice, Moses's account of the Sinai covenant. There you will find, that the chief promises of it were, that the Israelites should, with little difficulty, subdue the mighty nations of Canaan; that they should enjoy a long, quiet, and peaceable possession of that country, under the divine protection; that their land should abound with corn and wine, milk and honey, and every thing else necessary for their outward prosperity; that they should be

(a) Hosea iii. 2.

(b) Luke xv. 11,—32.

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preserved from famine, pestilence, and the other plagues and diseases, that God had inflicted on Egypt; that God would multiply them as the sands of the sea, and as the stars of heaven; that he would give them victory over their enemies; and place among them the external symbols of his presence. The passages of Scripture to this purpose, are so many and long, that it would too much swell these sheets to transcribe them. The few referred to below (†), ought to be carefully consulted. It is evident, that these passages are intended to enumerate the advantages of the Sinai covenant: and yet, that all the blessings mentioned in them are merely external, and have no necessary connection with the special favour of God and eternal life. Nor is this all. Scripture expressly asserts, that God, by bestowing such temporal blessings, fulfils his engagements in the Sinai covenant, Deut. vii. 12,—15.

“Wherefore, it shall come to pass, if ye hear—
“ken to these judgments, and keep, and do
“them: that the Lord thy God shall keep unto
“thee the covenant, and mercy, which he swore
“to thy fathers.” Would you know, how it
shall appear, that God hath kept his covenant? What follows, will inform you. “And he will
“love thee, and bless thee, and multiply thee;
“he will also bless the fruit of thy womb, and
“the fruit of thy land, thy corn, and thy wine,
“and thine oil, the increase of thy kine, and
“the flocks of thy sheep, in the land which he
“swore unto thy fathers to give thee. Thou
“shalt be blessed above all people. There shall

(†) Exod. xv. 25, 26. xxiii. 25,—28. Lev. xxvi. 3,
—14. Deut. vii. 12,—24. viii. 7,—9. xi. 13,—17.
xxviii. 3,—13.

“ not be male or female barren among you or
 “ among your cattle. And the Lord will take
 “ away from thee all sickness, and will put none
 “ of the evil diseases of Egypt, which thou
 “ knowest, upon thee; but will lay them upon
 “ all them that hate thee.” See also Lev. xxvi.
 9, 10.

The punishments threatened against idolatry and other gross breaches of the Sinai covenant, were also temporal, such as diseases, unsuccessful war, famine, pestilence, casting out of the land of Canaan, smiting that land with a preternatural barrenness, and scattering its old inhabitants among the heathen. The Scriptures cited below, are a sufficient proof of this (u).

There are however who plead, that the virtue of individuals was secured under the Old Testament, precisely as it is under the New, by promises of spiritual and eternal, not of temporal blessings: that the sanctions of the Sinai covenant only regarded Israel as a nation: and even, in that respect, had little in them peculiar to that people, because nations subsist only in this life, and therefore the justice of God requires, that in this life they should be rewarded or punished.

That the justice of God in such an immediate manner rewards and punishes nations, can neither be proved by reason nor Scripture. Men have been led to fancy this necessary, by a train of thin-spun metaphysical abstractions, though every day's experience might have convinced them of their mistake. Virtue indeed tends to promote the prosperity of nations, and vice to occasion their misery and destruction. But acci-

(u) Lev. xxvi. 14,—39. Deut. iv. 25,—27. xi. 17. xxviii. 15,—68. xxix. 22,—28.

dental circumstances may greatly retard the effect of that tendency, so that it is seldom kingdoms flourish or decay in exact proportion to their moral character. Mean time the honour of divine justice is abundantly secured, if the individuals, who compose a nation, are finally rewarded or punished according to their respective merit. It was therefore peculiar to the Jews, that their prosperity or misery, as a nation, wholly depended on their observance or neglect of the Mosaic law.

Yet there was another peculiarity in the Jewish dispensation, equally surprizing. The temporal happiness, even of individuals, depended in like manner, on their obedience or disobedience to the laws of God. God expressly threatened, that "he would set his face against that man, cut him off, and destroy him from among his people, that eat any manner of blood; that gave any of his seed to Moloch, or connived at one guilty of that crime; that turned after familiar spirits and wizards; or that did any work on the day of atonement," Lev. xvii. 10. xx. 2, —6. xxiii. 30. These expressions plainly imply, that the immediate vengeance of God would inflict death on such transgressors, when their crimes were unknown to earthly judges, or connived at by them. We are told, Exod. xx. 7. that "the Lord will not hold him guiltless," i. e. will certainly and severely punish him, "that taketh his name in vain." And Exod. xxxii. 32, 33. that "the Lord said unto Moses, who-soever hath sinned against me," i. e. so as to violate the condition of the Sinai covenant, "him will I blot out of my book." I will blot out of the register of the living, or cut him off from their

their number. Hence in many passages of the Psalms, wicked men are threatned with a sudden, violent, untimely death, or with other dreadful calamities, which should bear an evident signature of being inflicted by the immediate hand of God. See Psal. xi. 5, 6. xxxiv. 16, 21. xxxvii. 1, 2, 9, 10, 20, 35, 36, 38. lv. 23. xciv. 23. On the other hand, the Old Testament abounds with promises of long life and temporal prosperity to virtuous individuals. See Psal. i. 1,—3. xxxiii. 18, 19. xci. 1,—16. cxii. 1,—3. cxxviii. 1,—4. Prov. iii. 1, 2, 16. ix. 11. x. 27. Isa. xxxiii. 15, 16. There are in it particular temporal promises to good kings, Deut. xvii. 20. to upright judges, Deut. xvi. 20. to dutiful children, Exod. xx. 12. Deut. v. 16. to the meek, Ps. xxxvii. 11. to the bountiful and compassionate, Deut. xv. 10, 18. and to other virtuous characters. Several of the blessings promised in these Scriptures, *e. g.* a numerous and flourishing offspring, Psal. cxxviii. 1,—4. and preservation in time of war, famine and pestilence, Psal. xxxiii. 18, 19. Psal. xci. Isa. xxxiii. 15, 16. could proceed only from the special interposition of providence. All these promises may be considered as so many enlargements, or rather explications of that general one, Lev. xviii. 5. “The man that doeth these things shall live in them.” He shall not be cut off by an untimely death, but enjoy a long and prosperous life in the land of Canaan.

Thus promises of temporal blessings and threatnings of the opposite evils are almost every where to be found in the Scripture accounts of the Sinai covenant, whilst there is a remarkable silence as to spiritual and heavenly blessings. And yet, if promises of these last were any how contained in that

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that covenant, they were undoubtedly the most precious promises in it. Surely, a happy eternity is better than temporal prosperity: and the favour of God, communion with him, and conformity to his blessed image, are infinitely more valuable, than the pleasures, riches, and honours of this perishing world. Why then does Moses, when urging the Jews to a faithful discharge of covenant engagements, insist almost wholly on promises of temporal blessings, and seldom or never mention, promises unspeakably superior to these in excellence? Will a good writer, when he means to praise, forget to insist on that which appears to him the chief beauty and glory of an object? Or is it natural for a man of common sense, when pleading a cause in which he is deeply interested, to overlook that motive, which he himself thinks, and which every one who believes it must think of the greatest force?

A multitude of festivals were appointed to keep up the remembrance of temporal and outward blessings, which either paved the way for the Sinai covenant, or were secured by it. If the chief blessings of that covenant were spiritual and heavenly, why was not equal pains taken to keep them in remembrance? Were the Jews, think you, in less danger of forgetting spiritual blessings, than of forgetting temporal?

§ 3. Perhaps it may be alledged to invalidate my argument, that the land of Canaan was a type of the heavenly inheritance: that the temporal blessings of the Sinai covenant, were representations, earnest, and pledges of spiritual and eternal blessings: that the meaning of these types and figures was explained to those to whom they were first delivered, and by oral tradition trans-

mitted to succeeding ages: so that the Sinai covenant was enforced not only by the temporal promises which it literally contained, but also by the spiritual promises, which the letter of that covenant pointed out.—As this is plausible, it merits to be thoroughly examined. That types not explained, were too obscure a medium, for conveying the pretended spiritual sanctions of the Sinai covenant, especially to so gross and carnal a people as the Jews, will be proved § 5. Now no explanation is given of the types, in the books of the Old Testament, which were the only rule of faith and practice to the Jewish church. And surely, that which was intended as a principal sanction of the Sinai covenant, would not have been left to so treacherous and uncertain a method of transmission as oral tradition. We are told, 2 Cor. iii. 13. that “Moses put a veil
 “over his face, that the children of Israel could
 “not stedfastly look to the end of that which is
 “abolished,” i. e. could not discern what was typified by the precepts and sanctions of the temporary Sinai covenant. Surely, casting a veil over an object, and holding it up to full and open view, are two things so very opposite, that a scheme to do both at once, could never enter into any rational mind. If the meaning of the types was delivered to the Jewish church, a typical delineation would no more have veiled from them the spirit of the law, than the meaning of a Greek or Latin classic is veiled from a boy at school, by publishing it along with an exact literal translation into his mother language. The nature of types demonstrates, that they can have no existence, where there is nothing to be veiled or covered. If therefore, when the law of Mo-

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ses was given to Israel, the spiritual sense of it was known, or was intended to be revealed, a carnal veil to conceal that sense, must on either of these suppositions be absurd and preposterous. So that the typical genius of the Old Testament, instead of proving, plainly confutes the alledged spiritual fancies of the Sinai covenant. God saw proper, under the Jewish dispensation, to give some delineation by types and prophecies of the promised Messias, and the blessings of his purchase; that when the Messias should come, the exact correspondence of the gospel-dispensation, to what had been delineated so many ages before, might afford evidence, that both the Old Testament and the New were of divine original. But it would have been highly improper, that the delineation should have been so plain, as to be understood by the people of the Jews, at the time it was given, or at any other period, while the ceremonial law remained in force. The knowledge that their religion was only a shadow of good things to come, would have greatly lessened their esteem of its excellency; nay, would have rendered the yoke of the ceremonial law so galling and burdensome to them, that they would have been forward, without the divine permission to shake it off. But perhaps the saying so much upon this head can hardly admit an apology, after the clear light in which it has been set by Bishop Warburton in his *Divine Legation*, and the author of *The argument of the Divine Legation fairly stated*, and of the *free and candid examination of the Bishop of London's elegant sermons*. My only plea is, that the best books do not always happen to fall into the hands of those who peruse meaner compositions. And it seemed to me less

culpable, to adopt sentiments, which I could not improve; than to do wrong to my argument by omitting an essential branch of it, and perhaps also to raise suspicions in some of my readers, that I declined meddling with a knotty objection, merely because I was conscious I could not resolve it. Upon the whole, I firmly believe that Canaan was a type of the heavenly inheritance. But this only proves, that it represented heaven, as the Jews who possessed it, represented the heirs of heaven. It does not prove, that the land flowing with milk and honey, was bestowed, to reveal and seal to its inhabitants spiritual and heavenly blessings.

§ 4. The unchangeable faithfulness of God is another proof, that spiritual and heavenly blessings were not conveyed by the Sinai covenant. Antecedently to that æra, Moses and some others of the children of Israel were under a covenant of grace. The Sinai covenant therefore being made with Moses, as well as with the body of the Jewish people, *Exod. xxxiv. 27.* could not be a covenant of works, for obtaining eternal life. An opposite way of salvation by free grace, had been established long before, which no constitution or covenant could abolish. “The covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.” *Gal. iii. 17.*

The gospel covenant is not according to the covenant, made with the Jews, when they came out of Egypt (*v*), but essentially different from it, being a better covenant, established on better promises (*w*). Therefore as the gospel covenant

(*v*) *Jer. xxxi. 31.*

(*w*) *Heb. viii. 6.*

bestows

bestows spiritual and heavenly blessings, it is evident, that the Sinai covenant does not bestow them. The blessings of the Sinai covenant, were patterns of the heavenly things (*x*), shadows of good things to come (*y*), and surely patterns and shadows differ in nature from the things of which they are patterns and shadows.

The beauty and renown of the Jews, or their dignity, privileges and advantages by reason of the Sinai covenant are represented by Ezekiel (*z*), as something external in which they trusted, which led them to play the harlot, and to consecrate to their idols, what had been bestowed upon them by the bounty of God. Such self-confidence and alienation of heart from God, is often occasioned by outward prosperity. But the influences of divine grace produce other and better fruit.

§ 5. Divine illumination is one of the most important spiritual blessings. But it was not promised to God's antient covenant people. And to the greater part of them it was not vouchsafed. "The Lord gave them not an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear (*a*)."
This may be one reason, why the Old Testament dispensation is termed darkness (*b*), and a dark place (*c*).

From this defect in the Sinai covenant, two proofs of what I have been asserting, naturally arise. Divine illumination is bestowed on all interested in the gospel covenant, agreeably to the promises, Isa. liv. 13. "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord." Jer. xxxi. 34. "This

(*x*) Heb. ix. 9, 23. (*y*) Col. ii. 16, 17. (*z*) Ezek. xvi. 15,—20. (*a*) Deut. xxix. 4. (*b*) 1 John ii. 8. Heb. xii. 18. Isa. ix. 2. (*c*) 2 Pet. ii. 19.

“ shall be the covenant, that I will make with
 “ the house of Israel, after those days, saith the
 “ Lord; I will put my law in their inward parts,
 “ and write it in their hearts, and they shall
 “ teach no more every man his neighbour and
 “ every man his brother, saying, know the Lord,
 “ for they shall all know me from the least of
 “ them to the greatest.” But this fundamental
 spiritual blessing, without which there can be no
 holiness here, and no meetness or relish for the
 heavenly glory hereafter, was imparted to a small
 proportion of these interested in the Sinai cove-
 nant. Consequently grace and glory, which are
 ushered in by divine illumination, were not con-
 veyed by it.

Again, men not divinely enlightened, but
 whose minds were blinded, as we are told, 2 Cor.
 iii. 14. the minds of the Jews generally were,
 must be greatly indisposed to raise their thoughts
 to things future and invisible. If therefore spiri-
 tual and heavenly blessings, were veiled from their
 view under dark and figurative representations,
 and not promised to them in plain and explicit
 language, these blessings could not be intended
 as any part, far less, as the chief part of the
 sanction of the Sinai covenant: because obscure
 hints of them must needs escape the notice of so
 gross and carnal a people, and therefore could
 neither affect their hearts, nor influence their
 practice. Surely, infinite wisdom could never
 design a promise as the great foundation and sup-
 port of obedience, which the temper and situa-
 tion of these in covenant with God incapacitated
 them to understand, so long as instead of being
 clearly notified and promulged, it was industri-
 ously secreted from them by types and obscure
 prophecies,

prophecies, till the Christian dispensation should remove that veil, and bring it into open light.

§ 6. Agreeably to all this, we are told Heb. ii. 3. that "the great salvation first began to be preached by the Lord;" 2 Tim. i. 9, 10. that the gracious purpose of God for the salvation of sinners is only "now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath brought life and immortality to light thro' the gospel;" and Heb. ix. 8. that "the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest; while as the first tabernacle was yet standing."

If Jesus was the first who plainly published the doctrine of salvation; if, until he appeared, the purposes of redeeming love were not opened and unfolded, and immortal life was not brought to light; if the Jewish dispensation did not declare the means of obtaining the heavenly happiness: we must conclude, that there were not in the Sinai covenant, promises of spiritual and eternal blessings.

But why need I multiply arguments, when the authority of two divinely inspired writers has been interposed, to decide the controversy. We are not only told Jer. xxxi. 31,—34. and Heb. viii. 8,—12. that the Sinai and gospel covenants were essentially different: but are also informed, in what that difference chiefly consisted, even that the latter conferred pardon of sin and the enlightening and sanctifying influences of the spirit. Now this could be neither instance nor proof of such a difference, if the Sinai covenant had done the same things. But the words of the author to the Hebrews will bid fairer to strike conviction into the candid reader, than any thing I can say in illustration of them. "Behold, the days come,

“saith the Lord, when I will make a new co-
 “venant with the house of Israel, and with the
 “house of Judah : not according to the cove-
 “nant that I made with their fathers in the day
 “when I took them by the hand to lead them
 “out of the land of Egypt. For this is the co-
 “venant that I will make with the house of Is-
 “rael after those days saith the Lord ; I will put
 “my laws into their mind, and write them in
 “their hearts ; and I will be to them a God, and
 “they shall be to me a people. And they shall
 “not teach every man his neighbour, and every
 “man his brother, saying, know the Lord ; for
 “they shall know me from the least to the
 “greatest. For I will be merciful to their un-
 “righteousness, and their sins and their iniqui-
 “ties will I remember no more.”

§ 7. Let it not however be thought, I would conclude from this and such like Scriptures, that none under the Sinai covenant had an interest in spiritual blessings. I only mean to assert, that the claim of the inwardly pious Jew to pardon- ing mercy, to sanctifying grace, and to the hea- venly glory, was no more founded on his obedi- ence to Moses's law, than Job's claim to these blessings was founded on his being born in the land of Uz, and having seven sons and three daughters. The special favour of God was vouch- safed both to Jew and Arabian, only in virtue of that promise, which being before the law, could not be annulled by it (d). The law, or Sinai covenant, made nothing perfect, that honour being reserved to the bringing in of a better hope (e). It could not give life (f). It could

(d) Gal. iii. 17.
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(e) Heb. vii. 19.

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not give righteousness (g). Sins committed under it, as to their moral guilt, and spiritual and eternal punishment, were forgiven only in consequence of the New Testament, confirmed by the death of Christ (h), without whose death the righteousness of God in forgiving these sins could not have been manifested (i). So that without us, the Old Testament saints were not made perfect (j).

SECTION III.

§ 1. IT is now time to investigate the condition, the performance of which entitled to the blessings of the Sinai covenant.

This was no other, than an abstinence from servile work on the Sabbath; freedom from legal impurities and gross vices; an offering the sacrifices prescribed in the law; in time of war, the depending on God alone for success, and not having recourse to horses, chariots, or alliance with idolatrous states (k); and, in general, obedience to the letter of the law, even when it did not flow from a principle of faith and love.

A temporal monarch claims from his subjects, only outward honour and obedience. God therefore, acting in the Sinai covenant, as King of the Jews, demanded from them no more.

Indeed, no other, and more spiritual obedience could be expected from them. God had not promised in that covenant, to render them inwardly

(g) 2 Cor. iii. 9. (h) Heb. ix. 15. (i) Rom. iii. 25. (j) Heb. xi. 40. (k) See Dissertation 4. at the end of Bishop Sherlock on Prophecy.

holy. And if we attend either to the general depravity of human nature, or the particular perverseness of their temper, we shall easily be convinced, they could not render themselves holy. If then inward holiness was the condition of the Sinai covenant, the condition of it was something impossible to be fulfilled. And will not this reflect on the wisdom and goodness, nay, even on the justice of God. I acknowledge, God, as Creator, may justly require obedience, though the creature has rendered itself morally incapable to obey. But to suppose him formally entering into a covenant, the condition of which he knew, could not possibly be performed, is a shocking absurdity. If it was one of God's designs in the Sinai covenant, to advance the temporal welfare of the posterity of Abraham his friend; tell me, was that welfare secured, by suspending it upon that obedience to the moral law, which God well knew they neither could nor would yield? was that covenant any real privilege or advantage, the blessings of which were offered on impossible terms, and consequently could never be enjoyed? would it have been consistent with sincerity, to usher in such a covenant, with that kind declaration, *I am the Lord thy God?* To what wise purpose, such pomp and show, and so strong and numerous professions of favour and good-will, if men are prescribed a way to happiness, in which none of them can walk, and consequently by which none of them can ever arrive at it?

The temporal nature of the promises, in the Sinai covenant, proves the same thing. Would that God, who, with a pleasant countenance, beholds the upright, require inward holiness, and

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only promise outward blessings; require the soul, and reward only the body; require the creature's love, and yet give it no undoubted token of his love; require desires of communion and fellowship with himself, and yet not gratify them; require inward devotion, and promise that, which will be the less valued by us, in proportion as our inward devotion is more elevated and refined? The hire being servile, the work must be so too: God will never give any less than he claims from them.

It is absurd, to suppose any thing the condition of a covenant, which is not asserted to be a condition, in the covenant itself. And it is equally absurd, to understand the terms of a covenant otherwise, than in the clear, proper, direct sense of the words, wherein they are expressed. Now the Mosaical law, obedience to which all acknowledge was the condition of the Sinai covenant, is employed in directing the outward conduct, not the affections of the heart. It prescribes and forbids a variety of actions, while it seldom enjoins the virtues that adorn the inner man, or cautions against the vices that defile it.

If holiness results from conformity to a law, the Mosaic law, as a condition of the Sinai covenant, can only require outward purity. For it terms all holy, who yielded an outward and ceremonial obedience, how bad soever their hearts might be.

Paul's reasoning, Gal. iii. 11, 12. is another proof of this. "But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident; for the just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith: but, the man that doeth them, shall live in them." The force of the Apostle's

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file's argument is plainly this : That no man is justified by the obedience required in the Sinai covenant, is evident from Habak. iii. 4. " The just shall live by faith." Now obedience to the Sinai covenant is not of faith. It may flow from very different principles and motives ; that covenant requiring nothing more in order to the life promised in it, than our doing or omitting such and such things, and accepting in so far outward obedience, though faith or grace in the heart should not be the root of it.

Many things forbidden to Christians, such as divorce on slight occasions, polygamy, &c. (1) were in that covenant permitted to the Jews, because of the hardness of their hearts. Hardness of heart therefore, however opposite to spiritual devotion, was consistent with an interest in the Sinai covenant.

§ 2. No transgression deprived Israel of the temporal blessings God had promised them, unless idolatry, sinning presumptuously and with a high hand, and such like breaches of the essential fundamental articles of Moses's law. The Scripture often represents these as the source of God's vengeance against them. Thus Deut. iv. 3, 4. " Your eyes have seen what the Lord did because of Baalpeor; for all the men that followed Baalpeor, the Lord thy God hath destroyed them from among you. But ye that did cleave to the Lord your God, are alive every one of you this day." Deut. viii. 18, 19, 20. " But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God; for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his cove-

(1) Deut. xxiv. 1. Matth. xix. 3.

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nant which he swore unto thy fathers, as it is
this day. And it shall be, if thou do at all
forget the Lord thy God, and walk after other
gods and serve them, and worship them, I
testify against you this day, that ye shall surely
perish. As the nations which the Lord de-
stroyeth before your face, so shall ye perish,
because ye would not be obedient unto the
voice of the Lord your God." Jos. xxiii. 16.
When ye have transgressed the covenant of
the Lord your God, which he commanded
you, and have gone and served other gods,
and bowed yourselves to them; then shall the
anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and
ye shall perish quickly from off the good land
which he hath given you." Jer. xi. 10, 11.
They are turned back to the iniquities of their
forefathers, which refused to hear my words;
and they went after other gods to serve them.
The house of Israel and the house of Judah
have broken my covenant which I made with
their fathers. Therefore thus saith the Lord,
behold I will bring evil upon them which
they shall not be able to escape; and though
they shall cry unto me, I will not hearken
unto them." Indeed the whole history of
the Judges is one continued proof of this. And
in like manner God did not threaten to cut off
a particular Jew, and destroy him from among
his people, on account of pride, covetousness,
impatience, and other evil dispositions of heart:
but on account of eating blood, doing work on
the day of atonement, profane swearing, turning
after familiar spirits, giving of their seed to Mo-
loch, and other gross outward vices. In case of
lesser offences, even knowingly committed, there
were

were trespass-offerings instituted, Lev. vi. which God promised in so far to accept, as to avert the temporal judgment threatened to disobedience, and to bestow the temporal mercy promised to obedience.

§ 3. Sin-offerings were designed to restore a sinner to the state he was in, before the sin was committed: and therefore the offering them proves, that the sins for which they were offered, would have been a breach of the Sinai covenant, if they had not been expiated by such a sacrifice: and the not offering them in other instances equally proves, that these sins for which no sacrifices were offered, and which yet were not punished by death, are no breach of that covenant, seeing, without shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins. Now ceremonial uncleanness arising from the touch of a leper or dead body; and perjury, rash swearing, sacrilege, lying with a bond-woman betrothed, and other outward immoralities, were expiated by sacrifice (m). When the king, the high-priest, or the whole congregation, had sinned, sin-offerings in the strictest sense of the word took place: as trespass-offerings did in lesser sins, or when the offender confessed his fault, without being admonished or convicted by witnesses. But for impurity of heart, not manifested by speech or behaviour, neither the one, nor the other of these, were appointed to be offered.

But are we not told, that expiation was made on the solemn day of atonement, for all the sins and transgressions of the Israelites? We are so (n). But sin there signifies, as it does in many passages of

((m)) Lev. iv, v, vi. chap.

((n)) Lev. xvi. 16, 21, 22.

the books of Moses (o), the doing something which ought not to have been done. So that the sacrifices on the day of atonement, were only intended to expiate outward sins, which, being unknown, had not been expiated by the ordinary sacrifices. I shall not pretend to deny, that the minds of some might be divinely enlightened, to consider these sacrifices, as shadows and signs of the remission of all their sins, through the sacrifice which the Messias was to offer. I only plead, that there must be a proportion between sin and the sacrifice that expiates it, so that carnal outward sacrifices were insufficient, and spiritual sacrifices necessary, to expiate spiritual and inward guilt. Accordingly the sacred oracles inform us, that the legal sacrifices only sanctified to the purifying of the flesh (p), and that it is the blood of Jesus, not these types of it, which purges the conscience from dead works, and, in a proper sense, redeems the transgressions that were under the first covenant (q). Indeed so far were the sacrifices under the law from expiating heart-sins, that they did not free the conscience even from the guilt contracted by outward sins. In these respects they were weak and unprofitable (r). They only averted temporal judgments, removed the hinderances of an outward correspondence between God and the Jews, restored their right to the temple worship, and preserved to them, notwithstanding their sins, the benefits of the Sinai covenant. Sacrifices therefore removing only the outward pollution, not the inward guilt, contracted by sinful actions, could have no effect

(o) Lev. iv. 2.

(p) Heb. ix. 13.

(q) Heb.

vii. 18, 19. ix. 9, 14, 15.

(r) Heb. vii. 18.

as to inward vices, from which no outward pollution was contracted. This observation may throw some light on Acts xiii. 39. "By him all
 "that believe are justified, from all things from
 "which ye could not be justified by the law of
 "Moses." That law could not justify from heart-sins, or sins in practice committed with a high hand, or from the intrinsic guilt even of lesser outward sins. Thus, it is evident, that heart-sins were no breach of the Sinai covenant, seeing they were neither punished by death, nor expiated by sacrifice.

§ 4. He who yielded an external obedience to the law of Moses, was termed *righteous*, and had a claim in virtue of this his obedience to the land of Canaan, so that doing these things he lived by them (1). Hence, says Moses (1), "It
 "shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do
 "all these commandments," i. e. it shall be the cause and matter of our justification, it shall found our title to covenant blessings. But to spiritual and heavenly blessings, we are entitled only by the obedience of the son of God, not by our own. The Israelites were put upon obedience as that which would found their claim to the blessings of the Sinai covenant. But they were never put upon seeking eternal life by a covenant of works. It is on this account, that the Mosaic precepts are termed, Heb. ix. 10. carnal ordinances, or, as it might be rendered, righteousnesses of the flesh, because by them men obtained a legal outward righteousness; there was no objection against them, why they might not

(1) Ley. xviii. 5. Deut. v. 33.

(1) Deut. vi.

be freely admitted into the congregation and the sanctuary (u).

The unchangeable law of nature, requires a perfect obedience both in heart and life, which no son of Adam can say with truth that he has yielded. Yet we find God prescribed to the Israelites a form of glorying in their obedience to the Mosaic law, and of pleading upon that obedience for covenant blessings. Deut. xxvi. 12,—15. “When thou hast made an end of tithing
“all the tithes of thine increase, the third year,
“which is the year of tithing, and hast given it
“unto the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless,
“and the widow, that they may eat within thy
“gates, and be filled; then thou shalt say before the Lord thy God, I have brought away
“the hallowed things out of my house, and also
“have given them unto the Levite, and unto
“the stranger, to the fatherless, and to the widow, according to all thy commandments
“which thou hast commanded me: I have not
“transgressed thy commandments, neither have
“I forgotten them. I have not eaten thereof
“in my mourning, neither have I taken away
“ought thereof for any unclean use, nor given
“ought thereof for the dead: but I have hearkened to the voice of the Lord my God, and
“have done according to all that thou hast commanded me. Look down from thy holy habitation, from heaven, and bless thy people
“Israel, and the land which thou hast given us,
“as thou swarest unto our fathers, a land that
“floweth with milk and honey.” Would God have directed them, think you, to glory in their

(u) See Mr. Lock on Rom. ii. 26.

observance of that law, if, in fact, the sincerest among them had not observed it. Yet doubtless that was the case, if its demands were the same as those of the law of nature. But indeed, the things mentioned in that form of glorying were only external performances, and one may see, with half an eye, many might truly boast they had done them all, who were strangers notwithstanding to charity, flowing from a pure heart, a good conscience, and faith unfeigned.

Job, who probably represents the Jews after their return from the Babylonish captivity, was perfect and upright (*v*). Zacharias and Elizabeth were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless (*w*). The young man, who came to Jesus, enquiring what he should do to inherit eternal life, professed that he had kept the commandments from his youth up, and our Lord does not charge him with falshood in that profession (*x*). Paul was, touching the righteousness which was of the law, blameless (*y*). Yet Job curses the day in which he was born (*z*); Zacharias is guilty of unbelief (*a*); the young man, in the gospel, loves this world better than Christ (*b*); and Paul himself groans to be delivered from a body of sin and death (*c*). These seeming contradictions will vanish, if we take notice, that all of these, though chargeable with manifold breaches of the law of nature, had kept the letter of the Mosaic law, and thus were en-

(*v*) Job i. 1.

(*w*) Luke i. 6.

(*x*) Matth.

xix. 20.

(*y*) Phil. iii. 6.

(*z*) Job iii. 1, 3.

(*a*) Luke i. 20.

(*b*) Mat. xix. 22, 23.

(*c*) Rom.

vii. 24.

titled to the earthly happiness promised to its observers.

Indeed, in many passages of Scripture, perfection means no more, than a strict adherence to purity of worship, in opposition to idolatry and other gross violations of the Sinai covenant. And therefore, men who, if sincere in religion, were far from being eminent for inward holiness, are notwithstanding termed perfect. Thus it is said of Asa, that he did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, as did David his father; and that his heart was perfect with the Lord all his days, 1 Kings xv. 11, 14. And yet he cruelly imprisons a prophet for honestly reproving him, and so far from amending his ways, he goes off the stage without any record of his repentance and reformation: the last thing said of him being one of the worst, that, in his sickness, he sought unto the physicians and not unto God. On the other hand, though Solomon had grace in sincerity, yet it is said 1 Kings xi. 4. his heart was not perfect with God as David's was: because he was not perfect and steady like David in maintaining purity of worship. This remark was made long ago by the pious Mr. Hooker of Hartford in New England. *Application of Redemption*, book 10. p. 661. and with equal reason Bishop Warburton has observed, *Divine Legation*, vol. II. part I. p. 355,—360. that the title of Man after God's own heart, was given to David, not on account of his private morals, but of a behaviour so different from that of Saul, in steadily maintaining purity of worship. And much for the same reason, God says of Samuel in opposition to Eli, 1 Sam. ii. 35. I will raise me

me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to all which is in my heart and in my mind.

§ 5. You will ask, if this reasoning is just, why did the prophets so often insist upon it, that sacrifices and meer outward obedience were not acceptable to God (d)? I answer, in many such passages, the Jews are rebuked for neglecting the moral law, and placing all their religion in the ceremonial: so that it is not so much meer outward morality, that was blamed in them, as meer ritual religion, absurdly intermingled with the worship of idols, and accompanied with theft, murder, adultery, and other gross violations of moral duties (e). Besides, even these rites are not absolutely condemned. It is only suggested, that they have no intrinsic worth and value, that God does not love them for their own sakes, and therefore, under a more perfect dispensation, would abrogate them: and that though these rites, joined to external moral obedience, might secure temporal blessings, yet that they could not entitle, as many of the Jews, and even Paul himself, before his conversion fondly dreamed, to the special favour and friendship of God, and to eternal happiness.

It may be further enquired, if meer external obedience was the condition of the Sinai covenant, why were not all who yielded such obedience, blessed according to the promise, with long life and prosperity in the land of Canaan. I have no special concern with this difficulty, since it is almost equal on the contrary hypothesis. Those

(d) Psa. l. 8. Isa. i. 11. xliii. 23. Jer. vii. 21. Hos. v. 6, 7. vi. 6. Mic. vi. 8. (e) Jer. vii. 9, 10. Amos v. 21, —24.

who ask the question, will find it as hard to answer it in a satisfying manner, and yet are as much obliged to attempt it as I am. The hypothesis of those, who think that the promise of temporal prosperity in the Sinai covenant, was rather made to the Jewish nation in general, than to particular Israelites (*f*), would, if well founded, afford a full and easy solution to this difficulty. But what has been observed in the preceding section, § 2. perfectly confutes that notion. I would only observe, that if our views of the grounds of God's government were more complete, we should see no cause in any instance to arraign the divine veracity. Men, who seemed to live blameless lives, might, notwithstanding, be punished for outward sins; I mean either for outward sins secretly committed by themselves, or for the outward sins of parents, which were often visited upon the children to the third and fourth generations.

§ 6. There is another difficulty, which merits a fuller discussion. The Israelites were forbidden to covet what was their neighbours, and to lust after evil things, and were required to love the Lord with all their heart and soul, and mind and strength, and to love their neighbours as themselves. Hence it is plausibly argued, that abstaining from actual injustice, freedom from idolatry and other gross sins, and an observance of the external institutions of God's worship, was not the only condition of the Sinai covenant.

That conclusion, however, is more than the promises will warrant. These precepts unquestionably prove, that God prescribed to the Jews

(*f*) Alhardt de R^{at} Apol. Berit, p. 72, and 172.

inward devotion. And, which ought to be remembered, they equally prove, that God prescribed to them a perfect obedience, free from the very least sinful defect. Indeed the law of nature, being of eternal and unchangeable obligation, must necessarily have demanded such an obedience from the Jews, as it still demands it from all mankind. But, to suppose perfect obedience required, as the condition of a covenant, in which provision was made for the imperfection of obedience, would be contradictory.

We must not imagine that every thing in Moses's writings relates to the Sinai covenant. Some things in them were intended as a re-publication of the law of nature. And they contain many passages, which evidently relate to the duties and privileges of those interested in the gospel covenant. This is clearly the case with a great part of the 29th and 30th chapters of Deuteronomy. It is expressly said, Deut. xxix. 1. "These are the words of the covenant which the Lord commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, besides the covenant which he made with them in Horeb." Renewing an old covenant, is not making another beside it, which yet is here said to be done. A covenant was therefore at that time set before them, and they urged to enter into it (*g*), distinct from the Sinai covenant, even that covenant which God had confirmed by oath to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (*b*), which we know was no other than the gospel obscurely revealed (*i*). In confirmation of this I might observe, that the

(*g*) Deut. xxix. 12. (*b*) Deut. xxix. 13. (*i*) Gal. iii. 16, 17.

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circumcision of the heart to love God, or, in other words, special saving grace, though no promise of the Sinai covenant, is clearly promised in the covenant, which was revealed to Israel in the land of Moab (*j*); and part of the words of that covenant (*k*), are cited by Paul (*l*), as relating to the righteousness offered us in the gospel (*m*). I would not however infer from these chapters, that God meant to unfold to the Jews the nature of gospel blessings. He only gave them a general intimation of better things to come, binding them to believe and long for that season, when the event should unfold the sense of these predictions.

As possibly what I have said may not fully remove the difficulty, I would further observe, that the laws of Moses in general had a spiritual and a literal meaning. The righteousness upon which the temporal prosperity of Israel depended, was the righteousness of the letter of the law. The righteousness through which believers are entitled to eternal life, is the righteousness of the spirit of the law. And as the earthly Canaan was a type of heaven, so that external obedience which gave a right to it, prefigured that perfect obedience of the Redeemer, whereby alone we are entitled to the heavenly bliss. The law therefore, in its spiritual sense, required inward, nay, even perfect obedience. And possibly the prohibition of coveting, and the precept of loving God with all the heart, were left in the letter of the law, to lead good men to the spirit of it: the very letter

(*j*) Deut. xxx. 6.

(*k*) Deut. xxx. 11,—14.

(*l*) Rom. x. 5,—10.

(*m*) Bull's Harm. Apost. p. 77, and 78. operum edit. Grabii.

of these precepts, when taken in their full emphasis, reaching to the inmost thoughts and intents of the heart, and forbidding the least sinful desire.

This explains in what sense Paul asserts (*n*), that sin taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in him all manner of concupiscence, yea, deceived him and slew him. Perceiving as an ingenious congregational minister well remarks (*o*), that the precept thou shalt not covet, commanded not only his outward conversation, but had a spiritual sense in which it reached the very thoughts and affections of the heart: while he was yet in the flesh, he set himself with all his might to obey this precept, bound himself with vows and resolutions against the breach of it, and earnestly implored the divine assistance to render his endeavours effectual, that so he might be blameless in the righteousness of the law. But the more he set his heart on this righteousness, he would be the more strongly affected to the earthly happiness annexed to it as its reward: and thus all his attempts to be righteous by not coveting, only served to quicken and inflame his covetousness. So that finding himself utterly incapable to keep this command, he saw his sin exceeding sinful, and found himself condemned to death, by the spiritual sense of that very law, by which he once thought to live.

Yet still the breach of these precepts, in this their full emphasis and spiritual meaning, was no breach of the Sinai covenant: since, as has been already urged, heart-sins were neither punished

(*n*) Rom. vii. 8,—11. (p) Glass's Notes on Scripture texts, No. 3. p. 28, 29.

(*o*) Glass's Notes on Scrip-

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by death, nor expiated by sacrifice (p): and since provision was made in the Sinai covenant even for defects in outward obedience, sacrifices being appointed for all offences, that were not committed presumptuously and with a high hand (q). The precept therefore, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart," considered as a condition of the Sinai covenant, only requires such a regard to the deity, as that we obey the letter of his law. It does not in this view demand sinless perfection, but such an obedience, as fallen creatures have actually yielded: David for instance, who is said to have kept God's commandments, followed him with all his heart, and did that only which was right in his eyes (r); and Josiah who turned to the Lord with all his heart and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses (s). Not to repeat what was observed § 4. of those being described as perfect, who, if at all sincere in religion, were far from being eminent for inward holiness. The precept, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," considered as a condition of the Sinai covenant, only implies that we should not do these injuries to our neighbour, which we would not wish him to do to us. And the precept, "Thou shalt not covet," considered in the same light, only prohibits such an inordinate ungovernable desire of what is our neighbour's, as discovers itself by our employing force or fraud to possess ourselves of his property. And hence it was promised, that at the three an-

(p) See § 3. of this section.

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(r) 1 Kings xiv. 8.

(q) Numb. xv. 22,

(s) 2 Kings xxiii.

nual festivals, when all the males of Israel appeared before the Lord, "their enemies should not desire their land (*t*)," because God, by an extraordinary providence, was to restrain them at these times from attempting to invade it.

These remarks will serve to illustrate, what is meant by the flesh and by the spirit in Paul's epistles to the Romans and Galatians. Mr. Glass has observed (*u*), that the letter of the law, or the law in that carnal view without the spirit of it in which it is set before us, Rom. vii. 1, 5, 6. the state of the nation under it, and the suitable disposition of that people to perform the national righteousness, and to enjoy the national happiness annexed to it as its reward, is called the flesh. In some Scriptures the flesh means bondage under the Sinai covenant (*v*); and the condition of that covenant is described as the law of a carnal commandment (*w*), and as consisting in carnal ordinances (*x*). The rewards also of that covenant were carnal, and so was the disposition of the Jewish people. Meat and drink were in their esteem chief blessings of the kingdom of God (*y*). Their god was their belly (*z*). And hence of old they gathered themselves for corn and wine (*a*), and afterwards sought the Saviour, not because they saw his miracles, but because they did eat of the loaves and were filled (*b*). These then are not after the flesh, but after the spirit, whose prevailing desire it is, not to esta-

(*t*) Exod. xxxiv. 24. (*u*) Glass's Notes, No. 3. p. 27, and 5. e. g. (*v*) Isa. xl. 6. Phil. iii. 3. Gal. iii. 3. vi. 12. (*w*) Heb. vii. 16. (*x*) Heb. ix. 10. (*y*) Rom. xiv. 17. (*z*) Phil. iii. 19. (*a*) Hos. vii. 14. (*b*) Jo. vi. 26.

blish their own righteousness, and to enjoy an earthly happiness, but to be cloathed with a Redeemer's righteousness, and through him to attain the blessings of a spiritual and divine life. Those, on the other hand, are still in the flesh, and walk after it, who hope that their Christian profession and outward religious observances will entitle them to the divine favour! and who desire temporal prosperity, in one shape or other, more than begun communion with God, and conformity to his blessed image here, and the uninterrupted enjoyment of him for ever hereafter. This is the old man, corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, which none put off, till they have been taught the truth as it is in Jesus (c). The remains of this old man occasion the strife in believers between the flesh and the spirit (d). Even Paul himself found his members, or his frame and constitution as a son of apostate Adam, strongly inclining and disposing him, to trust in his own righteousness, and to seek for happiness in temporal enjoyments. And hence he bitterly complains of a law, that when he would do good evil was present with him, and of another law in his members, even the law of sin, warring against the law of his mind (e).

SECTION IV.

§ 1. POSSIBLY some may imagine, the subject of the preceding sections is of no great importance. The attentive perusal of them,

(c) Ephes. iv. 21,—24. Col. iii. 9,—11. (d) Gal. v. 5, 16,—18. (e) Rom. vii. 21, 23.

will I hope convince such, that just ideas of the Sinai covenant, throw considerable light on many important passages of sacred writ. I now add, that they remove some plausible objections against the faith once delivered to the saints, and afford convincing evidence, that the Sinai covenant was of divine original, but that the Messias is now come, and had authority to annul it.

The preceding pages will guide to the meaning of several texts, which have been often urged for the unscriptural tenets of justification by the deeds of the law, and of the attainableness of perfection in a present life. I shall not trespass on the patience of my readers, by spending time in illustrating what is so obvious. I refer them to section iii. § 4. of this Dissertation.

Ezek. xviii. 24, 26. has been often appealed to as an evidence, that saints may fall from grace, and eternally perish. "When the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doth, shall he live? all his righteousness that he hath done, shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die." The fallacy of this argument will appear, if we take notice, that a righteous man here means one, who yields an external obedience to the law of Moses, and in virtue of that obedience has a righteous title (*f*) to long life and prosperity in the land of Canaan. The Jews had been murmuring, ver. 2. that they were punished for the faults of their fathers. They did not complain, that they

(*f*) Deut. vii. 25.

were

were exposed to eternal destruction, by their first parent's breach of the covenant of works. And therefore, either to own, or to deny that doctrine, was foreign from the prophet's purpose. The ground of their complaint was, that they, though not guilty of the crimes against which God denounced temporal punishment in the Sinai covenant, yet were punished for the crimes of their forefathers. The prophet, on this occasion, begins with foretelling in the name of God, that the Jewish dispensation, in which the iniquity of the parents was visited upon the children, should be abolished, ver. 3. and that even, while it subsisted, the righteousness of a father would not avail a son who did not imitate it, and the crimes of a father would be of no prejudice to a virtuous son, ver. 10,—18. He next acquaints them, that notwithstanding their former idolatries and immoralities, if they would now reform their ways, and keep God's statutes, they should enjoy the life and prosperity promised in the Sinai covenant, ver. 21,—23: but that those who had hitherto performed the righteousness required in that covenant, would forfeit all title to the blessings of it, if they should commit iniquity, and do according to the abominations of the wicked, ver. 24. In the whole of this chapter, death certainly means temporal and outward evils; and therefore life must as certainly import temporal prosperity. The righteous and the wicked are not here described, by the inward graces of the spirit, or the want of these graces: but by their outward obedience or disobedience to the law of Moses. He is a righteous man in the sense of this chapter, "who hath not eaten
" upon the mountains, neither hath lift up his

“ eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, neither hath defiled his neighbour’s wife, neither hath come near to a menstruous woman, and hath not oppressed any, but hath restored to the debtor his pledge, &c.” ver. 6,—9. Of such a one it is said, ver. 22. “ in his righteousness that he hath done, he shall live.” i. e. he shall receive life on account of his good works : whereas persons just, in an evangelical sense, are entitled to eternal life by the righteousness of the Redeemer, and live by faith. All therefore that this passage proves, is, that a man, who, for a time, fulfilled the condition, and was entitled to the benefits of the Sinai covenant, may at last commit such wickedness and abomination, as will forfeit all these benefits. And, no doubt, this has often happened. One very affecting instance we have in Joash, who did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, all the days of Jehoiada the priest. But, after the death of that good man, both he and his princes, who had seemed equally zealous for religion, forsook God, and served idols. They transgressed the commandment of the Lord, and so could not prosper. And, in the sin that he had sinned, their prince perished (g). But, will this prove, that one may eternally perish, in whom the holy Spirit dwells, as a well of living water springing up to eternal life ? By no means. The righteousness of the Sinai covenant, could be, and often was lost. But Christ’s salvation is for ever, and his righteousness shall not be abolished (h). That I have given a just representation of Ezekiel’s meaning, the reader may be further con-

(g) 2 Chron. xxiv. throughout.

(h) Isa. li. 6.

vinced, by comparing these nearly parallel Scriptures, Jer. xviii. 7,—10. xxii. 2,—5.

§ 2. If the above account of the Sinai covenant is true, it is a demonstration of its divine original. Moses assures the Israelites, that their prosperity should be invariably determined by their observance or neglect of his laws: that, when they were faithful to these, every thing should go well with them; and that, when unfaithful, a flood of calamities should overwhelm them. No principles of human policy could have dictated such assurances. So wise a Lawgiver, would never have made them, had he not known, that the hand of God should visibly appear, bestowing blessings, and inflicting punishments, in execution of these promises and threats. Far less would he, under pretence of these extraordinary providences, have deprived his people of the natural means of their security and defence. I shall say nothing of the years of jubilee and sabbatic years, or of the obliging all the males thrice in the year to come up to Jerusalem, and thus to leave their frontiers exposed to hostile invasion. I shall confine myself to one law. Tho' their neighbours were powerful and ambitious, and well provided with horses and chariots of war, in which the strength of the antient militia chiefly consisted, God prohibited them the use of these dreadful engines of destruction, and enjoined them, when they should prevail against their enemies in battle, to hamstring their horses and burn their chariots with fire, assuring them that his protection, while they thus manifested their trust in it, should more than supply the place of both (i). Had Moses been an

(i) Deut. xvii. 16. Josh. xi. 6. Deut. xx. 1.

impossor, he was not mad enough, to have encumbered his body of laws with a constitution, obedience to which must have infallibly bewrayed the deceit.

But the argument acquires full force, when we view the event of this strange constitution. The judges of Israel, who had neither horses nor chariots, nor numerous armies, by faith in God subdued kingdoms, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, and turned to flight the armies of the Aliens (*j*). Deborah, who was sent on foot into the valley, delivers Israel from Sisera, who had nine hundred chariots of iron (*k*). Gideon, with three hundred men, destroys the numerous hosts of Midian (*l*). When David had taken from Hadadezar a thousand chariots and seven hundred horsemen, he houghed all the chariot horses, except a hundred (*m*): doubtless, reserving these, not for strength in war, for then he would not have destroyed nine out of ten, but for state in peace. Hence Absalom, affecting the pomp of a King, prepared chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him (*n*); and yet, in the day of battle, we find him mounted on a mule. A strong proof, that the Jews had not yet begun to violate the divine precept; by using horses and chariots in war. David, in whose reign the kingdom of Israel was advanced to its utmost glory, could say, "Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we will remember the name of the Lord our God (*o*)."
Solomon was the first who violated this precept (*p*). But troubles

(*j*) Heb. xi. 34. (*k*) Judg. iv. 10, 13. v. 13.
(*l*) Judg. vii. (*m*) 2 Sam. viii. 4. (*n*) 2 Sam. xv. 1.
(*o*) Psal. xx. 7. (*p*) 1 Kings iv. 26.

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soon overtook him. The Edomite on the one side, and the King of Damascus on the other insulted him. And this new military force, instead of enabling him and his successors to quell their enemies, enfeebled and greatly destroyed Israel, by depriving them of the divine protection.

God indeed, in that period, granted his people some very signal deliverances: but it was, when having no strength of their own on which to rely, they had recourse to God alone for protection. See the case of Asa, 2 Chron. xiv. 9,—11: of Jehosaphat, 2 Chron. xx. 12, 17: and of Hezekiah, 2 Kings xviii. 23. and xix. 35. It is evident from many passages in the prophets, that alliance with idolatrous princes, and the warlike use of chariots and horses, was accounted a renunciation of God's protection, and an infallible forerunner of ruin. See Isa. ii. 7,—9. xxxi. 1,—3. Hos. xiv. 3. I am indebted for these remarks to Bishop Sherlock's fourth Dissertation at the end of his Discourses on Prophecy. And as many who read and admire his elegant Sermons, are unacquainted with that performance, I make no apology for transcribing them. The same author has justly observed, in his fifth Discourse on Prophecy, that whenever it was necessary to chasten the Jews for their iniquities, their calamities were prophetically described to them, that they might not be tempted by their adversity to think, that the gods of the nations had prevailed against them, but might know that the hand of their own God was upon them. See Isa. xlviii. 3, 4, 5. Indeed, without such special predictions, every interposition of providence, to execute the sanctions of the Mosaic law, was a new proof, that God himself was the author of that law,

law, and had annexed to it these sanctions. But the argument for the divine legation of Moses, both from the original sanctions of his law, and the execution of these sanctions, will probably be placed in a fuller and stronger light, when the Bishop of Gloucester shall favour the public with his third Volume.

§ 3. Though I write to Christians, and therefore have often appealed to the New Testament: yet I think the passages I have cited from Moses and the Prophets, abundantly justify the foregoing account of the Sinai covenant. And, if they do, it greatly concerns the Jews, to consider the consequence: even this, that the promised Messiah is now come, vested with authority to abrogate the Sinai covenant, and to introduce a new and better dispensation.

Old Testament prophecy plainly asserts, that the dominion of the Messiah was not to be confined to the land of Judea, but to extend to the heathen: that all the ends of the earth should be invited to subject themselves to his government: and that nations the most distant should share in the blessings of his kingdom. It was impossible for remote nations to keep the law of Moses, a great part of the worship prescribed by it, being confined to the temple at Jerusalem, and all the males being obliged by that law to appear there thrice every year. The promise therefore, that the Lord should be King over all the earth, is equivalent to a prediction, that the ceremonial law should be abolished.

A prosperous possession of the land of Canaan was a chief blessing of the Sinai covenant, and a blessing insured by promise to all God's antient people. But it was impossible, that the subjects

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of the Messias, who were to be scattered through the whole habitable earth, should share in this blessing. "The land would have been too narrow by reason of the inhabitants, the place too strait for them to dwell in." The extent of the Messia's kingdom rendered it impossible, that Canaan should contain all his subjects. And therefore, under his government, the covenant in which that land was entailed on God's people, as a reward of their obedience, must be abrogated.

Let me appeal to the candid Jew, is not the Christian dispensation, in its own nature more excellent than the Mosaic? Is freedom from gross sins, and the performance of external rites and ceremonies, an obedience equally worthy of reward, with the perfect obedience of him, who was holy, harmless, undefiled, and continually went about doing good? Or does a quiet possession of the land of Canaan, deserve to be compared, with all spiritual and heavenly blessings in Christ Jesus? Surely neither of these can, with the least modesty, be pretended. Is then imposture more excellent than truth? Did a false pretender to the character of Messias, contrive a scheme, which exceeds in glory that dispensation, for whose divine original Jews, as well as Christians, warmly contend? Say not, it is absurd, that men should be entitled to reward through the righteousness of another. Of all men in the world, Jews must plead this, with the worst grace. Their confidence in God is chiefly built on their descent from pious ancestors. And Moses, their divinely inspired lawgiver, expressly asserts, that the peculiar favours conferred on them, were not owing to their superior worth and excellency, but were

were a testimony of God's affection to their worthy forefathers (q). If God saw meet, in testimony of his love to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and as a reward of their obedience, defective and imperfect as it was, to bestow upon their natural seed a variety of outward blessings: wherefore should it be thought a thing incredible, that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus, in testimony of his love to his own, his only begotten Son, and as a reward of his merit and sufferings, should admit the spiritual seed of this glorious and divine person, to be with him where he is to behold his glory? Do you believe, that the blood of bulls and goats, saved from temporal punishment, men guilty of crimes, which, by the tenor of the Sinai covenant, would otherwise have subjected them to it; and yet can you deem it absurd, that the blood of the equal and fellow of the Almighty, should screen from future vengeance, these who humbly rely upon it?

It was observed Section i. § 6. that the ceremonial law was intended for a middle-wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles. But when the earth should become the Lord's and the fulness thereof, there could remain no occasion for such a separation, and therefore Paul justly argues upon this principle, that the distinction of meats is now abolished, 1 Cor. x. 25, 26.

Experience shews, that the Jews do not now enjoy the blessings of the Sinai covenant. What account can they give of this? To charge God with breach of promise would be blasphemy. Do then the Jews fail of performing the condition

(q) Deut. ix. 4, — 6, x. 15.

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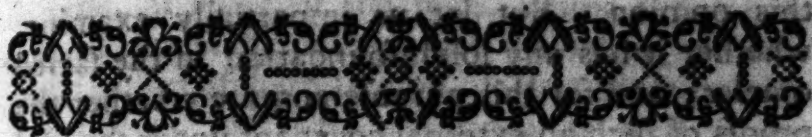
annexed to that covenant? Neither can this be said with truth. They are free from idolatry and other gross sins, whereby their forefathers often forfeited the divine favour. If they offer no sacrifices, in this they are not blame-worthy, seeing they have no access to that place, in which alone sacrifices can be lawfully offered. They have not eaten upon the mountains, nor lift up their eyes to idols: and many of them, whatever slander may alledge, are not only sober and chaste, but just and honest in their dealings between man and man. But do those of them, who walk the most blamelessly in these precepts, live by them? Do they enjoy the reward, ensured by the Sinai covenant to such outward obedience? Nothing less. They are fugitives and vagabonds in the earth, and from one end of it even to the other, they are scattered among all nations. Must we not conclude from this, that the covenant entailing a prosperous possession of the land of Canaan, upon such an external obedience, as many of them actually perform, remains now no more in force?

One thing merits particular attention. While Jerusalem and the temple yet stood, the Jews were forewarned by the person whom they stile an impostor, that ere the end of that generation, the most dreadful evils should come upon them, as a punishment for their rejecting the true Messiah. What Jesus foretold, the event verified, and still continues to verify. Why their sufferings should commence from that æra, and correspond, with such minute exactness, to the threatenings of Jesus, is an event, which the condition of the Sinai covenant, if we suppose it still subsisting, will never account for. That covenant
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can sufficiently account for all the former prosperity and sufferings of the Jews. But here, at once, the light it hitherto afforded, fails us, and we are left in the dark, as to the most considerable event, which ever befel God's antient people. God was always wont to confirm the word of his servants, and to perform the council of his messengers (r). But, if Christianity is a cunningly devised fable, must we not conclude, that, for a series of 1700 years, God, by a chain of the most astonishing providences, has confirmed the words of an impostor, and performed the council of a false pretender to the character of Messias?

The source of the present calamities of the Jews, which cannot be learned from Moses's law, is discovered in his prediction, Deut. xviii. 18, 19. of a prophet who, like him, should introduce a new dispensation. A voice from heaven, commanding to hear Jesus, declared who was meant in that prophecy. God's vengeance on the Jews for not hearkening to Jesus, has further declared it. And, according to God's promise, we look and long for a period, when it shall also appear, from the prosperity of the children of Israel, when they have returned, and sought the Lord their God, and Jesus their King in the latter days.

(r) Isa. xlv. 26.



DISSERTATION II.

The Character and Privileges of the Christian Church, with a Review of Dr. TAYLOR'S Key to the Apostolic Writings.

SECTION I.

§ 1. **W**E have seen in the first Dissertation, that under the Old Testament, men destitute of inward piety were really in covenant with God, and had a just claim to certain external covenant blessings. In the course of the argument, several Scriptures have been occasionally illustrated, which represent the nature of the Christian dispensation, as in these respects diametrically opposite to that of the Sinai covenant. Many however maintain, that an external covenant subsists under the Gospel, by which professors of Christianity, though inwardly disaffected to God and goodness (*a*), are entitled to certain outward blessings, and church privileges. The common distinction of the church into visible and invisible, or at least the incautious manner in which some have explained it, has contributed not a little to the prevalence of

(*a*) See Taylor's Key, ch. 12. § 236.

this opinion. But let us impartially examine, whether it has any solid foundation in the sacred oracles; and for this purpose enquire whether the proofs of such an external covenant under the Old Testament, will equally apply to gospel times.

§ 2. Under the Old Testament dispensation, God manifested himself as a temporal monarch. And hence numbering the people, multiplying chariots and horses, and alliances with infidel states, were severely forbid, because the Jews were to depend upon God alone, as in a peculiar extraordinary manner, their protection and defence. If God stands in the same relation to any society of professed Christians, these and such like prudent methods, of guarding against the ambition of rival states, must be to that society unlawful. A consequence so absurd, that, I suppose, few of my readers are enthusiasts enough to digest it.

Idolatry, under the Sinai covenant, was a state crime, and, therefore, an iniquity to be punished by the judge. The idolater suffered, because he renounced allegiance to his lawful prince, and transferred it to an usurper. If Christ's kingdom was of this world, it would be reasonable to inflict like penalties upon those, who will not that he should reign over them. But Christ himself hath told us, that his kingdom is not of this world, and that it is secured not by external violence or persecution, but by the influences of the Spirit of grace (aa).

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 (aa) I shall here transcribe a passage from p. 59, 60. of Dr. Increase Mather's Life, published by his son at Boston 1724. "He became sensible, that the example
 " of the Israelitish reformers, inflicting penalties on false
 " worshippers,

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God, as King of the Jews, visited the iniquities of the fathers upon the children. Just as those guilty of high treason, forfeit their honours and estates, for their offspring, as well as for themselves. But we are expressly assured, Ezek. xviii. 3. that, in gospel times, this dispensation of providence should wholly cease. An evidence, that God no more acts in the character of a temporal prince!

The respect paid to God, under the Old Testament dispensation, corresponded to his character as a temporal monarch, and in a great measure consisted in external pomp and gaiety, dancing, instrumental music, and other expressions of joy usual at coronations or triumphs. But the hour is now come, in which the true worshippers, must worship the Father, in spirit and in truth, not with external shew and pageantry.

“ worshippers, would not legitimate the like proceedings
“ among the Christian Gentiles. For the holy land of
“ old was by a deed of gift from God, miraculously
“ and indisputably granted to the Israelitish nation, and
“ the condition on which they held it, was their obser-
“ vation of the Mosaic institutions. To violate them,
“ was what carried a rebellion in it, and was an high
“ treason against the king of the theocracy, an iniquity
“ to be punished by the judge! At the same time, so-
“ journers in the land, were not compelled unto the
“ keeping these laws and rites, which Moses had given
“ to his people. Nay, and the Israelites themselves, fell
“ many of them, into the worst of heresies. Yet, whilst
“ they kept the law and rites of Moses, the magistrate
“ would not meddle with them. The heresy of the Sad-
“ ducees struck at the foundation of all religion. Yet,
“ we do not find, that our Saviour blamed the Pharisees
“ for not persecuting them, as they could have done.
“ The Christian religion brings us not into a temporal
“ Canaan. It knows no designs; it has no weapons,
“ but what are purely spiritual.”

§ 3. Under the Old Testament, a nation was in covenant with God, many of whom were inwardly disaffected to him. Now, those only, who have the spirit and temper of Christ, are true members of his church.

The words *ἐκκλησία* *לִקְוָה*, signify a people, not only called, but gathered by a call, who hearken to and comply with the offers of the gospel, and are called, "chosen and faithful," Rev. xvii. 14. who are called by that inward call of the spirit, which renders the outward call of the gospel effectual. A call attended with invincible power, like that to Matthew, Mat. ix. 9. "follow me;" or that John xi. 43. "Lazarus come forth;" nay, like that by which God "calls the things that are not, as though they were," Rom. iv. 17. and "commands light to arise out of darkness," 2 Cor. iv. 6. Hence we read of the called according to God's purpose, Rom. viii. 28. and of the purpose of God according to election standing, not of works, but of him that calleth, Rom. ix. 11. So that we may define the Christian church, a society of persons effectually called; or a company of penitents, united by faith and love to Christ as their head, and to one another as members of his mystical body, and on every proper occasion outwardly discovering this union. Now, if the church of Christ, is a society of persons who obey the gospel call, it is evident, hypocrites are no members of that church. For the gospel calls to a humble penitent reliance upon Christ, not to a bare profession of Christianity: and invites us to fellowship with Jesus, 1 Cor. i. 9. and a right to his kingdom and glory, 1 Pet. v. 10. not to any external

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external society and advantages. The outward call of the gospel, constitutes none members of the church, save those who comply with it. Else even infidels, and openly profane persons, who hear the gospel preached, would be members of the church. We are invited to come to the church, having on the wedding garment. To come, without it, we are not allowed. God has no where enjoined, those who want faith, to profess it. Indeed, it is impossible, that the God of truth, should enjoin a falshood. When therefore, we require a profession of faith in order to church privileges, we, on the matter, acknowledge faith itself necessary. For the only reason, why we regard a profession, is, our supposing, that he who makes it, is a true believer. Faith, or rather the righteousness it receives, we consider as the foundation of his title to church privileges, and profession only as an evidence of that title. He, who makes a credible profession, is accounted a member of the church, because from such profession, as an evidence, we judge that he possesses the proper condition of church membership, not because such profession is itself that condition. So that we reckon none members of the visible church, without reckoning them members of the invisible church likewise, or, in other words, without reckoning them united to Christ by a true and lively faith, and entitled to heaven through his perfect righteousness. The union and communion of church members, one with another, is founded only on their union with Christ. Consequently, where there is no real union with him, there can be no real union with the members of his mystical body.

If

If there is an external church, essentially different from the internal, and consisting of different members, then Christ has two churches in the world, and is the head of two mystical bodies. But if the same persons, and none else, are members of the visible and invisible church, then hypocrites are really members of neither, though, from our ignorance of their hypocrisy, they may be accounted such.

Of old, indeed, God had two different kinds of people, the natural descendants of Abraham and his spiritual seed: Jews outwardly, and Jews inwardly: those born after the flesh, and those by the promise. But, now, the slaves of sin, are no more a part of God's family, John viii. 35: those born after the flesh are cast out of the church, Gal. iv. 23, 30: and he only is Abraham's seed, and a Jew in the New Testament sense of the word, who is one inwardly, walking in the steps of the faith of Abraham, and doing his works, John viii. 39. Heb. ii. 16. Rom. ii. 28, 29. iv. 12. ix. 6,—8. As the prophets foretold, God has now but one people, who are all holy and circumcised in heart, Isa. iv. 3. xxxv. 8. lii. 1. liv. 13, 60. throughout. Ezek. xlv. 9. have the law of God written on their hearts, and know the Lord from the least of them even to the greatest, Jer. xxxi. 33, 34. And John describing the New Testament church, under the emblem of the new Jerusalem, tells us, that there shall not enter it any thing that defiles, or worketh abomination, or maketh a lie, but they only, which are written in the lamb's book of life, Rev. xxi. 27. This also appears to be the meaning of that obscure promise, Isa. lxv. 20. "There shall be no more an infant of days,"
"nor

“nor an old man that hath not filled his days :
“for the child shall die an hundred years old,
“but the sinner, being an hundred years old,
“shall be accursed.” Children are governed by
passion and appetite, blind to their own best in-
terest, and intent only upon present gratificati-
ons. If, in riper years, we still neglect our duty,
and follow our natural depraved inclinations :
then we continue in a puerile state, losing no-
thing of childhood save its innocence, neglecting
the end of life, and consequently living in vain,
and exchanging childish toys for follies more
mischievous. Isaiah here foretells, that, in the
Christian church, such a prolonged childhood
should have no place (*b*).

But we have Scripture-proofs, of this doctrine,
still more express. He only has a title to the ho-
nourable name of Christian, who departs from
iniquity, 2 Tim. ii. 19. If any man has not
the spirit of Christ in him, he is none of his,
Rom. viii. 9. Christ is the door of the sheep,
and therefore none are God's sheep, who enter
not in at this door, John x. 7. xiv. 6. He that
believeth not, whatever he profess, has no part
in Christ's salvation, but is condemned already.
Nothing external is of any avail, under the gos-
pel, unless accompanied with the new creature,
or faith that worketh by love, Gal. v. 6. vi. 15.
Old things are done away : and all things are
become new, 2 Cor. v. 17. The Messiah is of
quick understanding in the fear of the Lord, and
does not judge after the sight of his eyes, nor re-
prove after the hearing of his ears, Isa. xi. 3. It
is the heart, not the outward appearance which

(*b*) Dr. Heylin's Theological Lectures, p. 44.

he regards. The most splendid performances, if without charity, he accounts as nothing, 1 Cor. xiii. 2. The Lord only knoweth them that are his, 2 Tim. ii. 19. Consequently that which constitutes one a member of the Christian church, is invisible to the human eye. Believing with the heart, as well as confessing with the mouth, is a necessary condition of the gospel salvation, Rom. x. 9. Those who are only outwardly, and in profession religious, are of the synagogue of satan, Rev. ii. 9. iii. 9. Spots in our feasts, 2 Pet. xi. 13. Jude 13. Children of the devil, 1 John iii. 10. Tares sowed by the wicked one, Matth. xiii. 38. False brethren brought in or crept in unawares, Gal. ii. 4. Jude iv. Having no lot nor portion in the blessings of Christ's purchase, because yet in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity, Acts viii. 21, 23. Hence Paul pronounces a general sentence of excommunication against false-hearted professors, 1 Cor. xvi. 22. "If any man love not the Lord Jesus, let him be *anathema maranatha*." And, indeed, who can be more detestable, and worthy of a more dreadful curse, than he who harbours in his heart enmity against Christ, under the masque of pretended friendship? In the day of judgment, Christ will profess to all such, depart from me, I never knew you, ye workers of iniquity, Mat. vii. 22. He could not have said in so absolute terms, that he was never related to them, if he had owned them, while on earth, as his church and people. Does not that rebuke, Matth. xxii. 12. "friend, how camest thou in hither, not *having on the wedding-garment*," import, that hypocrites have no right to a place among God's people? We are told, the man thus rebuked

buked was speechless, having no excuse to make for his conduct. But he might have excused it, if bare profession was all that was necessary, to render one a member of the visible church.

The church and the body of Christ are synonymous expressions, 1 Cor. xii. 12, 13. Ephes. i. 23. iv. 16. Col. i. 24. It is evident, that, in these passages, the apostle speaks of the true mystical body of Christ. For we are told, 1 Cor. xii. 13. that "by one spirit we are all baptized into one body." And Eph. iv. 16. that from Christ, "the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love." It is equally plain, that the apostle speaks of particular visible churches, reaping benefit from the various gifts of their teachers. Therefore, every particular visible church, was considered by the apostles, as composed only of true believers: and these not baptized with the Holy Ghost, were accounted by them no members of Christ's mystical body. What then shall we say of those, who in all their actions are animated and influenced by the devil, who live after the flesh, and retain nothing of the Christian, save the empty name? Christians are as lively stones, built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ, 1 Pet. ii. 5. And is that, think you, the character of men dead in trespasses and sins?

The church is the pillar and ground of truth, 1 Tim. iii. 15. Christ's sheep, or the members of that church, hear his voice and follow him.

And he gives to them eternal life, so that they shall never perish, John x. 27, 28. They only are Christ's disciples indeed, who continue in his words, John viii. 31. and who glorify the father in bearing much fruit, John xv. 8. Such descriptions can by no means agree to men, who support the most dangerous errors, or who, in their practice, are monsters of wickedness, full-filling, in secret at least, the desires of the flesh and of the mind.

Let us hear what Christ says, Matth. xvi. 18. Upon this rock, (meaning himself) I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Has Christ, or rather has not the devil, polished and fashioned the hypocrite and the secretly profane? Are they built on Christ, and on the doctrine of his apostles: or rather, are they not built on atheism and self-deceit? Against the church, the gates of hell shall never prevail. Do these then belong to the church, over whom the powers of darkness exercise an absolute dominion, and against whom the devil and his instruments prevail to their utter destruction?

§ 4. These arguments appear to me sufficiently plain and decisive. Yet, it may not be amiss to strengthen them, by a survey of the nature and design of the Christian sacraments, and of the qualifications requisite for the right participation of them.

This would indeed be of little importance in our present enquiry, if they were in the right, who maintain, that sacraments are only intended to seal the truth of the gospel, and that therefore such who desire to have that truth confirmed, may partake of them, although they have no
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actual interest in covenant blessings. If this be so, ignorant and immoral persons, nay, even infidels may be admitted to the Christian sacraments: because even such may desire to be convinced of the truth of Christianity. But, that hypothesis, has no solid foundation. The covenant, it is true, and the seals of it, are freely offered in the gospel. Yet these seals being pledges of covenant blessings, such only who accept that offer, have a right to partake of them. Giving a pledge, implies, that we will give the thing of which it is a pledge. If one offer to enter into a contract, and to give certain pledges of fulfilling it, these pledges would accompany not the offer, but the acceptance of it. Those then, who have no claim to covenant blessings, have nothing to do with the sacramental pledges of them. Persons indeed who had no right to spiritual blessings might typify them, a type not implying any right to the thing typified. And hence bad men were admitted to the sacrifices and ceremonies of the law. But the New Testament sacraments are seals, not types. And blessings can never be sealed to men, no way interested in them.

Let us then enquire, of what covenant baptism and the Lord's supper are signs and seals. And here, on the principles which I oppose, a scheme full of darkness and confusion presents itself. Tho' seals are not a part of a covenant, but something annexed to it for its confirmation; yet, in the scheme referred to, the New Testament sacraments are seals of the alledged external covenant: they are the principal blessings of it: and to complete the absurdity, they are the principal conditions of it too. For profession of Christianity is

the pretended condition of that external covenant. And partaking of the sacraments, is the chief act of that profession.

But error is best displayed by setting in a just light the opposite truth. Scripture sufficiently proves, that the sacraments of the New Testament, are signs and seals of no other covenant, than that covenant of grace, which secures eternal happiness to all interested in it. And the partaking of them manifestly implies, a partaking of covenant blessings on the one hand, and the exercise of faith on the other.—To begin with baptism. John baptized for the remission of sins (*c*), and so did Christ's disciples (*d*). We are told, that baptism saves us (*e*), and by baptism we are said to put on Christ (*f*), to die, to be buried, and to rise with him (*g*): because the water in baptism represents and seals that blood of Jesus, which cleanseth from the guilt of sin, and purchases for us the sanctifying influences of the spirit, and all other needful blessings. Baptism then is a seal of spiritual blessings. And spiritual blessings it cannot seal to the unconverted.—“But, perhaps, baptism is no more than a badge of our Christian profession, ingrafting men into the visible church, giving them certain outward privileges, and vesting them with the honourable title of children of the kingdom. It comes in the room of circumcision. May it not therefore be intended for similar purposes.” That it came in the place of circumcision I allow, in so far as circumcision was a seal

(*c*) Mark i. 4. (*d*) Acts ii. 41. (*e*) 1 Pet. iii. 21. (*f*) Gal. iii. 27. (*g*) Rom. vi. 4. Col. ii. 12.

to real saints of the righteousness of faith, not in so far as it sealed external privileges to all the Jews, and was a badge of distinction between them and other nations. Baptism has none of these properties, which rendered circumcision a fit sign and seal of an external covenant. Circumcision impressed an abiding mark; was the characteristic of Judaism; belonged to all Jews, however differing in opinion or practice: and those born of a Jew, even when come to age, were entitled to it. Whereas baptism impresses no abiding mark. A profession and suitable practice, not baptism, is the characteristic of Christianity. And persons come to age, have no just title to baptism, till they believe and repent, and therefore are not baptized, unless their opinions and practices appear agreeable to the gospel, their credible profession, and not their descent, founding their outward claim to that privilege. The proof of this is extremely obvious. John's baptism was termed the baptism of repentance (*b*), and baptism to repentance (*i*), because he required of all, whom he admitted to baptism, a profession of repentance, and exhorted them to such a conduct as would demonstrate their repentance genuine (*j*). Peter demanded repentance of his hearers, in order to baptism, and only they that gladly received his word were baptized (*k*). And Philip acquaints the Eunuch, if thou believe with thy whole heart, thou mayest be baptized (*l*). Well therefore, does Paul join together, the washing of water, and the renew-

(*b*) Acts xix. 4.
iii. 6, 8.

(*k*) Acts ii.

(*i*) Mat. iii. 11.
38, 41.

(*j*) Mat.
(*l*) Acts viii. 37, 38

ing of the Holy Ghost (*m*), as things which should never be separated. And, for the same reason, Peter informs us, that baptism is of no avail unless attended with "the answer of a good conscience (*n*)," i. e. a sincere and cordial acceptance of the offers of the gospel.

The Lord's supper was instituted to keep up a thankful remembrance of the death of Christ (*o*), as a sacrifice fully expiating sin, and purchasing for us all the blessings of the new covenant (*p*). Christ, by giving us the symbols of his broken body and shed blood, seals and confirms our right to himself, and to all the blessings of his purchase. And hence the Lord's supper is termed the communion of the body and blood of Christ (*q*), not because it assures us that believers in general are saved, but because it is delivered to us in particular, as a pledge of Christ crucified, and of all his benefits. We, on the other hand, by shewing forth Christ's death, do profess, to look upon it as the procuring cause of a joyful and spiritual life. When we receive and feed upon the sacramental bread and wine, we declare our spiritually receiving and feeding upon Christ, and express our warm and grateful sentiments of redeeming love, and by sitting down with others, who make the same profession, we signify, that we are all partakers of the same faith, and of the same covenant blessings, and, on that account, bound to the most fervent mutual affection (*r*). These are the ends of the Lord's supper. Without the exercise of faith,

(*m*) Tit. iii. 5. (*n*) 1 Pet. iii. 21. (*o*) Mat. xxv. 27. 1 Cor. x. 16. (*p*) Luke xxii. 19. 1 Cor. xi. 26. (*q*) 1 Cor. x. 18. (*r*) 1 Cor. x. 17.

they cannot be attained. And therefore, without faith, we must needs be unfit for that ordinance. It was intended, for those alone, for whom Christ's body was broken, and for the remission of whose sins Christ's blood was shed (s). And hence it is enjoined (t), let a man examine himself, and so let him eat. The Greek word δοκιμαζέτω is borrowed from goldsmiths trying gold, whether it be genuine or counterfeit: and is used to signify trying the quality or goodness of anything, in order to determine whether it is of the right sort. Here it means, examining, whether we are real Christians, or false-hearted hypocrites. The reason of the precept appears from the next verse. Grace alone capacitates to discern the Lord's body with that spiritual gust and relish, without which we partake unworthily, and eat and drink judgment to ourselves.

I acknowledge, however, that ministers may lawfully dispense the sacraments, to hypocrites who have a credible profession. And so may a judge lawfully assign you a sum of money, when by credible witnesses you prove your right to it, though, after all, you may have bribed these witnesses to perjure themselves. But though ministers may lawfully dispense the sacraments to hypocrites, hypocrites cannot lawfully demand them. The exercises of soul to be performed in receiving them, are exercises of which true believers alone are capable. They only can wash their garments, and make them white in the blood of the Lamb. They only can spiritually receive and feed upon Christ's body and blood.

(s) Luke xxii. 19, 20. compared with Mat. xxvii. 28.

(t) 1 Cor. xi. 28.

The external rites others may perform, but not in the manner which makes them seals of the covenant, and that is the only manner in which God allows them to be performed. And thus I have fully shewn, that the seals of the covenant are under the New Testament peculiar to the inwardly pious, and that therefore none else are now in covenant with God.

SECTION II.

§ I. **L**ET us next enquire, what are the blessings, of the alledged external covenant, between God and professors of Christianity, though in heart insincere?

The chief blessing promised to Israel, in the Sinai covenant, was temporal prosperity. But no such promise is made, either to the visible or invisible Christian church. Every individual disciple of Jesus, must lay his account with crosses and afflictions (*u*). How then can a society, consisting of professed disciples, look for exemption from them? The appearance of holiness must meet with little favour, in a world, where real holiness is hated or despised. In every age, some who profess Christianity in its genuine purity, are involved by that very profession, in peculiar hardships and distresses. If God had promised to bestow upon them temporal prosperity, this could by no means be reconciled with his truth and faithfulness.

(*u*) Matth. xvi. 24. John xvi. 33. Acts xiv. 22. Tim. xii. Heb. xii. 6, 7.

The treasure of the Christian is in heaven (v). Every outward blessing he enjoys on earth, is only an appendage to his inheritance (w), dispensed to him in a sovereign manner, in so far as is for God's glory and his good, not claimable by any absolute promise.

Godliness, indeed, has still the promises of the life that now is (x), and our Lord has assured us, that the meek shall inherit the earth (y). But whatever these promises import, they are confined to the meek and godly, and therefore afford no shadow of proof, that unsincere professors of Christianity are in covenant with God. Probably, they relate to an uncommon temporal prosperity of the church in the latter days. If they extend to Christians in all ages, they must be explained of that sanctified use of temporal blessings, which is peculiar to the truly godly, and cannot mean the outward possession and enjoyment of worldly comforts, because, in that respect, the professed Christian is often equalled, if not exceeded by the infidel and profane.

Men may make a gain of pretended piety, and by assuming a form of godliness, while strangers to the power thereof, may reap considerable outward advantages. But these advantages they receive not as covenant blessings, and in virtue of a promise. How a hypocritical profession, which God despises, and against which he has denounced the severest threatenings, can notwithstanding be the means of obtaining his blessing, and interesting in his promises, is indeed hard to be conceived.

(v) Mat. vi. 20.
iv. 8.

(w) Mat. vi. 33.

(x) 1 Tim.

(y) Matth. v. 5.

§ 2. The gospel-call is not so properly the privilege of the church, as the instrument by which the church is gathered. In itself, it is a glorious means of conveying the blessing. In the issue, it proves a blessing to those only who accept it. A preached gospel, when slighted or neglected, aggravates the sinner's condemnation. Besides, it ought to be remembered, the gospel-call is not confined to professed Christians. It extends to avowed infidels and to profane persons, who live among Christians, though that these are in covenant with God, none will alledge. The gospel-call, is as much a blessing to the unconverted, before they make a false profession, as after they have made it. They acquire no new right to it by their hypocrisy. And their salvation does not become a whit the more probable, by their assuming the Christian name.

§ 3. The sacraments of the New Testament are seals of the covenant of grace: and he who has no interest in that covenant, has no right to them, and no capacity to use them profitably. This I have shewn at large, Section ii. § 4. They are therefore no instituted means of conversion, being intended to strengthen faith where it is, not to produce it where it is not. God may bring good out of evil, and make the unwarrantable use of the sacraments, an occasion of a hypocrite's conversion. Yet still his unworthy partaking was no covenant-mercy, but an eating and drinking judgment to himself. If reflections on this sin, produce that godly sorrow, which worketh repentance unto salvation, reflections on blasphemy, murder, or adultery, may do the same. But who would, on that account, ascribe to these shocking crimes, the happy fruits of penitential

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nitential sorrow? If the symbols of Christ's body and blood so affect the eye and heart, as to issue in a saving change: that is an accidental benefit, which rarely happens, and which properly flows from the view of the sacramental elements, not from the use of them.

§ 4. Perhaps it will be said, that professors of Christianity, though unconverted, are honoured with the title of Saints, and sometimes favoured with the gifts of the spirit.—But the name of a Saint, without the thing, can scarce be accounted a blessing. And the gifts of the spirit are not dispensed by covenant, but from the free sovereign pleasure of God, and are intended for spreading the gospel, and edifying the body of Christ, not for the private benefit of him that is endued with them. Though we had them all in the highest degree, yet without charity or love to God and our neighbour, we should be nothing.

§ 5. Has the unconverted professor, a better claim to the fellowship of the faithful, or is he better qualified to relish their spiritual enjoyments, than the infidel, or the openly profane? Are the living and the dead united? Do minds of the most irreconcilably opposite dispositions, maintain a friendly intercourse? Can a true believer, and a hypocrite or self-deceiver, be said to be equally yoked? Are they suited, to mourn together, under a sense of the pollution of their nature, and of the sinfulness of sin: to rejoice together in the dear Redeemer: and earnestly to pray together for the influences of God's spirit, the light of his countenance, and the refreshments of his presence? The one says in his heart, it is good for me to draw near to God. The other says to the Almighty, depart from me,
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I desire not the knowledge of thy ways. And are these likely to strengthen each other's hands in the good ways of God. If to hear the word without believing it, or to eat and drink judgment to themselves, if these are privileges of the faithful, then, and not otherwise, unconverted professors are perfectly well qualified for communion with them.

§ 6. What then are the covenant blessings, that belong to unconverted professors of Christianity? Surely, not the spiritual blessings infallibly connected with salvation, for in these, believers only have an interest. Not outward prosperity, that being no where promised in the covenant of grace, either to the visible, or to the invisible church. Not the sacraments, which, unless as signs and seals of spiritual blessings, are of little value. Not the call of the gospel, for they have no more benefit by it, than infidels, and the openly profane. A strange covenant indeed, which confers only an empty unmeaning title, but from which the persons in covenant derive no advantage!

SECTION III.

§ 1. **L**ET me next examine the condition of this alledged external covenant.

If the unconverted have a right to any blessing in the covenant of grace, it must be either from their descent, their profession, their faith, or their obedience.

Birth confers no such right on persons come to age. Our opponents acknowledge, that without a credible profession, none are to be admitted

to the Lord's table: and that even the children of heathens, if they make such a profession, may be admitted.

§ 2. Does then a bare profession of Christianity give a real right to any covenant-bleffing? It were strange indeed, if God should thus reward, what he has severely prohibited, Psal. 1. 16, 17. "Unto the wicked, God saith, what hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth? Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee." Has any man a right, to pretend to be, what in truth he is not: to put on the garb of a child of light, while he is indeed a child of darkness? will seizing what does not belong to us, give us a legal title to it? will stealing and wearing another man's cloaths, constitute a relation between me and him, and entitle me to his lands? is a wolf a sheep, because he happens to be in sheep's cloathing? do falshood and dissimulation render men holy, and give them a claim to church privileges? Are not men, who differ in profession from a world lying in wickedness, if they resemble it in disposition, linked by a stricter tie, to the world than to the church?

Let me ask, why a right to certain covenant-bleffings, arises from a bare external profession. It will, I suppose, be answered, because, in the judgment of charity, men account that profession true. Well. The supposed truth of the profession, is that upon which men proceed. If the profession appeared false, they would utterly disregard it. Shall then the Searcher of hearts regard that, which our ignorance of the heart is our only reason for regarding? we imagine a

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profession sincere, and therefore approve it. Is that a reason for God's approving it, who knows it to be hypocritical? So soon as the hypocrisy of a professor is manifested, he is no longer looked upon by men, as a member of the church. It was always manifest in the sight of God. Therefore God never looked upon him as such. If man's knowledge of a professor's hypocrisy, exclude him from the church, much more must God's knowledge of it exclude him. So that external profession renders a person in covenant with God, only in the apprehension of other men, not in reality.

That faith and holiness are no way necessary to found a rightful claim to church privileges, and yet that God should forbid admitting any to these privileges who do not exhibit credible evidence, that they are thus qualified, is unreasonable to suppose. It would be ridiculous to demand probable appearances of piety, previous to receiving men as members of the church, if, without piety, they had as true and lawful a right to be thus received. If the want of a qualification do not invalidate my right to a thing: want of the appearance of that qualification can never warrant others to obstruct my possession. The servants of a family act an indecent and unwarrantable part, if they cast vessels out of a house, which the master of the house esteemed a proper and useful part of his household-furniture. And the church is righteous overmuch, if she insists on something higher than God himself requires, nay, forbids men that which God has allowed them.

§ 3. The right of the unconverted to covenant-blessings cannot flow from faith, because the unconverted are destitute of that grace.

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Nor can it flow from their obedience, for only that obedience, which springs from faith, is accepted of God. I acknowledge freedom from idolatry and other grosser vices, and the observance of certain external ceremonies, entitled Jacob's posterity to the blessings of the Sinai covenant. And that unconverted professors of Christianity may be free from gross vices, I doubt not. But so too may professed infidels. And yet none will pretend, on that account, that they are separated from the world, and devoted to God. The two sacraments are the only rites of divine institution binding upon Christians. And they are purely signs and seals annexed to the covenant of grace, and therefore of no benefit to men not interested in that covenant. They are intended to seal a covenant, not to make one. The unconverted have neither right to these seals, nor disposition to use them for the purposes of their institution. And can they confer federal holiness, when we do not use them as God has prescribed; yea, when we have no right to use them at all? Vicious intromitting with what does not belong to us, may gain us favour from men who know not our wickedness and deceit, but can never recommend us to the Searcher of hearts who perfectly knows them.

When Paul says, 2 Cor. v. 16. "Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh," the meaning is, that now, under the gospel, we regard no man as entitled to church privileges, either by descent, or by obedience to what is termed, Heb. vii. 16. the law of a carnal commandment.

SECTION IV.

§ 1. I Should do injustice to my argument, if I said nothing of some passages of Scripture, from which, those who read without due attention, may be apt to conclude, that hypocrites are true members of the church.

The church seems compared to a field, where tares grow up with the wheat, to a threshing floor, where good grain is mixed with the chaff, to a net which draws bad fish as well as good, and to a feast where a guest comes, not having on the wedding-garment, Matth. xiii. throughout, and xxii. 11. Must we not conclude from these Scriptures, that hypocrites are members of the church?—By no means. Unless we must also infer, that chaff is good grain, and that tares are wheat, because they often happen to be mingled together. There is no occasion for an inference thus dishonourable to sacred writ. These parables represent to us, not the nature of the church, but her condition in this world; where hypocrites are mingled with Christians, breathe the same air, worship in the same temple, and make the same outward profession. Bad fish as well as good are drawn by the gospel-net, i. e. The preaching of the gospel excites many, who remain inwardly wicked, to profess Christianity. Yet the bad fish are not put into vessels with the good, i. e. they have no real fellowship with them, and do not partake in their privileges. The field, where the tares grow up with the wheat, Christ himself has told us is the world, not the church. And, if the parable of the tares

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shews, that hypocrites mix with the godly in the visible church; it also shews, that they have no right to do it, that they are fraudulently sown in God's field by the devil, and though for a time borne with, shall at last be disgracefully rooted out. Such would therefore do well to consider, what honour they derive, or what benefit they can reap from a church-membership of which the devil is the author. The feast where a man came, not having on the wedding-garment, represents the folly of those who not only pass for good men in the eyes of the world, but fancy themselves entitled to the blessings of grace and glory, though they are not cloathed with the spotless robe of the Redeemer's righteousness.

§ 2. Our Lord says, John xv. 2. "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away," which seems to intimate that men may be branches in Christ or members of the church, and yet spiritually unfruitful.—I answer, hypocrites may be termed branches in Christ, because they were esteemed such by themselves and others: as apostates are said to be blotted out of the book of life, Psal. lxix. 29. Rev. xxii. 19, because, though not really elected, they had once been accounted so. Or these words may be a threatening, that Jesus would root out the Jewish nation, as barren and unfruitful branches, from the vineyard of his church, i. e. deprive them of their covenant-relation to God, and of the blessings connected with that relation. See Rom. xi. 22. This is Cyril's interpretation, lib. 10. c. 24. Or, perhaps, the words *ἐν ἑμοί* should be joined, not to the preceding words *καὶ κλημα*, but to the following *μὴ φέρων*. And then it intimates, not that there are unfruitful branches in Christ the true

true vine; but that there are branches, which not being in Christ, and having no sap and nourishment from him, bring forth no fruit acceptable to God, and so must be rooted out, and cast into hell-fire. The Syriac version favours this interpretation, every branch which in me brings not forth fruit. *§ 3.* 1 Cor. v. 10, 13 is brought as an evidence, that men may be brethren, and within the church, who yet are covetous, extortioners, or living in some other course of presumptuous sin. But though this passage shews, that bad men may be tolerated in the world, and civil intercourse lawfully kept up with them: it equally shews, that church-fellowship with those whom we know to be bad, is unlawful. The Israelites, in the time of the passover, were to search, and cast out of their houses, all the leaven that was in them; and that was allowed to be in them at other times. The New Testament dispensation is one continued passover, in which unconverted sinners, who were formerly members of the same external society with the godly, are to be cast out of the church, which is now a new lump unleavened, admitting only the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. Hypocrites may lurk in the church, as leaven might lurk in a house, in the time of the passover, notwithstanding the most diligent search. But hypocrites have no right to be there, and, so, soon as they are discovered, must be turned out. They are called, *Brethren*, 1 Cor. v. 11. They are members of the church in the opinion of others. But brethren in truth they are not. They seem to be within, and indeed are within the church, as to the body, but they are without it as to the soul. They are within,

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within, in the same sense, as heaven, which ought to have been without. It deserves our notice, that the apostle does not speak of some of the church as within, and others as without, and thus give countenance to the distinction of a visible and an invisible church, but speaks of all the members of the church as within, and of the world as without. All then who belong to the church, are within, or members of the church invisible. Some are so, truly, and in the eyes of God; others, only apparently, and in the eyes of men. The first have a title to be within. The second have no title. If we reckon them within, it is only, because their profession being credible, we charitably believe it sincere, and that consequently they are united to Christ. And hence, so soon as we find, from their course of life, that their profession was deceitful, it becomes our duty, to renounce communion with them.

§ 4. 2 Tim. ii. 20. is also urged to prove, that God intended there should be bad men in the church, as in a great house, there are wooden vessels, and vessels of dishonour. But as Origen well observes, contra Celsum, lib. 4. p. 210. the great house, in this passage, means the world, and not the church. The world is termed a house, Matth. v. 15. For the apostles who are to give light to those in the house, are termed, ver. 14. the light of the world. And from ver. 16. it appears, that those in the house, means persons to be converted to Christianity, by the shining of the apostles light, and who consequently were not yet converted. And though the church is termed a house in other Scriptures, yet, when Paul wrote to Timothy, a great house would have

have been no fit epithet for Christ's little flock. And indeed in this passage, the church and the world seem plainly distinguished. The world is represented as a great house, in which are vessels of dishonour, bad men as well as good: the church as a pillar in that house, peculiarly belonging to God, and having holiness engraven upon it. Let me add, it would be strange, if Christians were required, ver. 21. to purge and separate themselves from heretics and profane persons, and yet, in the immediately preceding verse, these vessels of dishonour were represented as a necessary part of the church's furniture. In the world, that great house, vessels of dishonour must be admitted. But it is the duty of the church to rid herself of them, for to her, no vessels, save vessels of honour and mercy, belong. Compare Rom. ix. 21.

§ 5. They are mistaken, who think, that the outer-court, Rev. xi. 1, 2. represents the visible church. For the church considered as inwardly the habitation of God, and outwardly employed in his worship, is represented by the temple and inner-court, where was the altar, and where the Israelites worshipped. But the outer-court represents a corrupt society, assuming the name of the church, whose pretensions God will demonstrate to be false, and which he will give up to be trodden down by her enemies. This may be the reason, why the angel commissioned to measure the temple, was prohibited to measure the outer-court, because that outer-court was properly no part of the temple.

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SECTION V.

§ 1. **T**HUS, it has been sufficiently proved, that a church is a society of saints, sincerely professing the same faith, partaking of the same sacraments, interested in the same spiritual privileges, and entitled to the same heavenly blessings: and that therefore hypocrites belong not to that society. This is the Bible idea of the word church, and therefore it ought to be received, however it differ from fashionable opinions. Yet it may not be amiss to shew, that this was also the sentiment of the primitive Christians.

The Catholics and Donatists entertained the same notions about the nature of the church. They only differed about her marks, and where she was to be found. The Donatists asserted, that if a church retained in her bosom the openly profane, it was thereby defiled, nay, ceased to be a true church, so that its act became null and void, and baptism, conferred in it, was to be renewed. The ministry of a hypocrite they acknowledged, that of an openly profane person they denied to be valid. They confessed, that men secretly wicked, though intermingled with the church, did not pollute her, because she was ignorant of their wickedness (*a*). The Catholics went further, and held, that the church was

(*a*) Optat. Milevitanus, l. 2. p. 44. ed. Paris. Coll. Carthag. 1. p. 39, and 31. p. 87, 89. Augustinus in Breviculo Coll. 3. c. 8. libro post Coll. c. 9, 10. & contra Epist. Parmeniani, l. 2. c. 10. § 21.

not defiled even by harbouring those within her, whose wickedness she knew (b). Augustine often appeals to Cyprian as of this opinion. His own opinion was, that hypocrites may be tolerated in the church, because it is impossible for men, by searching the heart, to spy out their hypocrisy, but that those should be expelled out of it, whose naughtiness is publicly known (c).

§ 2. In the mean time, none of the fathers maintained, that hypocrites were true members of the church. To begin with Augustine. How warmly soever he opposed the Donatists, yet he acknowledges *de doctrina Christiana*, l. 2. c. 22. and in many other places, that the church properly means a collection of regenerate persons, who truly believe in Christ, and who all together make up the one mystical body of Christ their head. He says in express terms, *de doct. Christ.* l. 3. c. 32. "Non enim revera Domini corpus est, quod cum illo non erit in æternum. De Baptismo, contra Donat, l. 4. c. 13. Semper ab illius ecclesiæ quæ sine macula & ruga est unitate, divisus est, etiam qui congregationi sanctorum, in carnali obduratione miscetur. Ad ecclesiam non pertinent avari, &c. *ibid.* l. 5. c. 3. Videntur esse intus, nec tamen ad unicæ illius columbæ membra pertinent, *ib.* c. 16. Ecclesiam non tenent, nisi qui divina mandata custodiunt, reliqui intus tantum videntur, *ib.* c. 27. Non omnes qui

(b) Their arguments for this may be seen, Coll. Carthag. i. p. 39. Augustin. de unitate eccl. c. 14. & in libris contra Parmenianum & Pœtilianum.

(c) Ep. 34. ad Cornelium, p. 173. ed. Baluzii & ep. 31. ad Antonianum, 473. & 74.

" nobiscum sunt, ex nobis sunt, *ib.* l. 6. c. 3. Non
 " pertinent ad ecclesiam, quamvis intus esse vi-
 " deantur, *ib.* c. 24. § 44. Qui super arenam
 " ædificant, verba Domini audientes, sed non
 " facientes, extra petram esse convincuntur, quod
 " est extra ecclesiam, *ib.* l. 7. c. 51. Puto me
 " non temere dicere, alios ita esse in domo
 " Dei, ut ipsi etiam sint eadem domus Dei:
 " alios autem ita dici esse in domo, ut non per-
 " tineant ad compagem domus, sed sicut esse
 " palea dicitur in frumentis. *De unitate Eccle-*
 " *sie*, c. 25. § 74. Multi sunt in sacramento-
 " rum cummunione cum ecclesia, & tamen jam
 " non sunt in ecclesia." Hypocrites lurking in
 a church, were no more accounted by Augu-
 stine a part of it than excommunicated persons:
 whence he infers, *De unit. eccl.* c. 4. & *de Bapt.*
contra Donat. l. 7. c. 2. that though we have fel-
 lowship with a church, in which bad men lurk,
 we have no fellowship with these bad men.

Cyprian's sentiments are equally clear. *De*
opere & Eleemosynis, p. 241. " Quid fecit in do-
 " mo Dei perfidum pectus? Quid, qui Christo
 " omnino non credit, appellatur & dicitur Chri-
 " stianus?" & *Ep.* 55. p. 83. he tells us, that
 those only who persevere are the church, and that
 apostates are not of God's planting, but as it is
 said, 1 John ii. 19. though they went out from
 us, were never of us. Indeed, the high enco-
 miums given the church throughout Cyprian's
 works, demonstrate, that he did not consider hy-
 pocrites as members of it.

Origen tells us, that wicked men are not to
 be accounted Christians (*d*); that they were not

(*d*) *Contra Cels.* l. 4. p. 176.

admitted except by fraud to their assemblies (e); that a Christian, who is truly such, subjecting himself only to God and his word, cannot be hurt by the devils (f); that the body of Christ is the whole church of God animated by the Son of God; and that the members of this body are whosoever believe, because as the soul enlivens and moves the body, which of itself is destitute of life and motion, so the *λογος* excites his mystical body the church, and every member of it to a becoming temper and behaviour, so that without him they do nothing (g); that he who commits gross sins, such as covetousness, fornication, &c. is not truly a brother, but, as the apostle observes, is only called a brother (h); that, if the gates of hell prevail against any, they are not that church which is built on a rock, but a multitude of men in the church, falsely boasting that they belong to it; and that a soul having spot and wrinkle, and not holy and undefiled, is neither the church, nor a part of it (i). He grants that the churches in his days were filled with bad men, but often insinuates, that those were only members of the church in name, and that to call societies of bad men churches, was an impropriety of speech (j).

Tertullian ad nationes, l. i. c. 5. "Cum aliquos de nostris malos probatis, jam hoc ipso, Christianos non probatis."

Clemens Alexandrinus defines the church the congregation of the elect (k); and says, there is

- (e) Origen, contra Cels. p. 178. (f) Ib. l. 8. p. 401. (g) Ib. l. 6. p. 309. (h) Comm. ad Matth. p. 234. (i) Ib. p. 276. (j) Ib. p. 260, 442, and 481. & Homil. 15. ad Jerem. p. 147. ed. Huetii. (k) Strom. l. 7. c. 5. p. 346. ed. Potteri.

one true church, in which the righteous are enrolled according to the decree, and which gathers within her bosom, those whom God had predestinated, having foreseen they would be righteous (l).

Hermes's Pastor asserts, that men whose faith is feigned, and who have not forsaken all wickedness, though they may lurk in the church, do not belong to her (m).

Nothing can be fuller or stronger on this head than the words of *Irenæus Adversus Hæreses*, l. 3. c. 24. edit. Massuet. "Ubi enim ecclesia, ibi & spiritus Dei; & ubi spiritus Dei, illic ecclesia." And l. 1. c. 10. he says, that the true members of the church have one heart and soul, as well as one mouth.

Athenogoras's testimony is equally express. *Apol. c. 2. ed. Om. υδεις γαρ χριστιανος πορνους, ει μη υποκρινεται τον λογον.*

Justin Martyr pronounces it evident, that those are not Christians, though in words they may profess the doctrine of Christ, who do not live as he has taught (n).

Ignatius expressly distinguishes between being called Christians, and being truly so (o); speaks of some who were only Christians in appearance (p); and expresses his desire, that he might not only be called a Christian, but found such (q).

So universally known was the distinction, between those who were, and those who only called themselves Christians, that it did not escape

(l) Ibid. p. 899.

(m) L. 1. vis. 3. l. 3. sim. 9.

§ 13, and 18.

(n) *Apul. 2. c. 21. ed. Grabe.*

(o) *Ep. ad Maynes. c. 4.*

(p) *Ep. ad Trall. c. 10.*

(q) *Ep. ad Rom. c. 3.*

the notice of heathen writers in those early ages, *Pliny Epist. l. 10. ep. 97.* "Propositus est libellus sine auctore, multorum nomina continens, qui negarent se esse Christianos, aut fuisse, quum, præeunte me, Deos apellarent, & imagini tue, quam propter hoc jusseram cum simulacris numinum adferri, thure ac vino supplicarent, præterea maledicerent Christo; quorum nihil cogi posse dicuntur, qui sunt revera Christiani. Ergo dimittendos putavi."

§ 3. Besides these direct proofs, there are several opinions and practices of the fathers, which plainly imply a belief, that hypocrites were not members of the church. They reckoned that believers and holy persons alone, had a right to the sacraments. What else meant the Deacon's crying with a loud voice, before the dispensing them, "Sancta sunt sanctis, nemo accedat imparatas (r). Let none come in hypocrisy, or only with a feigned faith and love (s). Let him who is baptized be a stranger to all wickedness, a friend of God, an enemy to the devil, chaste, pure, holy (t), &c." Augustine says, that bad men, whether in the church or out of it, have no just or lawful title to baptism (u): and Origen, that he only rightly and with profit partakes of the Eucharist, who does so with an undefiled mind and a pure conscience (v). Tertullian informs, that a solemn renunciation of the devil, and of the pomps and vanities of the world, was

(r) Chrysostom hom. 17. in ep. ad Hebr. & Eclaircissement sur la Eucharistie par Blondel, c. 22.

(s) Const. Apostol. l. 2. c. 57. (t) Ibid. l. 3. c. 18.

(u) De baptismo, contra Donat. l. 5. § 8.

(v) Comm. ad Matth. p. 254.

always previous to baptism (*w*): and that we are not baptized that we may renounce sin, but because we have already renounced it, and are purified in heart. “Non ideo ablui mur, ut delinquere desinamus, sed quia desimus; quoniam jam corde lati sumus (*x*).” Hippolitus mentions as a condition of baptism, the washing away our moral impurity, and casting from us the burden of sin (*y*). And Justin Martyr says, it is lawful for none to partake of the Eucharist, unless he believe our religion true, having been washed in the laver of regeneration; and live so, as Christ has enjoined (*z*).

The state of the Catechumens is another proof of this (*a*). For at least two years, they continued under trial: and were not honoured with the name of brethren, or admitted to baptism and church-membership, until it appeared, upon a strict enquiry into their behaviour, that they were resolved to live as became the disciples of Christ (*b*). I might add, that the refusing to restore apostates to church privileges, without the fullest evidence of their sincere repentance, indicates their opinion, that they only have a right to those privileges, who are truly holy.

§ 4. The antients, instead of distinguishing as we do between a visible and invisible church, asserted, that there was one only church, consisting of true believers, united in faith, worship,

(*w*) De Cor. Milit. c. 3. (*x*) De Penitentia, c. 6. (*y*) Homil. in Theoph. § 10. Op. ed. Fabricii, vol. I. p. 264. (*z*) Apol. 1. § 86. p. 128. ed. Grabe. (*a*) Pfanner de Catechumenis, c. 1. (*b*) Origen, contra Cels. l. 3. p. 142. & Con. 42. Concilii Eliberitani.

and government : of which one church, some were really members, while others only seemed to be so, and in truth were as much without it, as Pagans and Jews (*c*). Hence Origen often terms hypocrites *οἱ νομιζομεναι ἀπο τῆς ἐκκλησίας*. A society of true believers, united to one another in external communion, was the only thing, the fathers acknowledged as a church. So far were they from owning a visible church, distinct from the invisible : that they did not own an invisible distinct from the visible. Had they acknowledged an invisible church in the sense we do, they would no doubt have acknowledged, that all were members of it, who were renewed in the spirit of their mind, whether baptized or not, whether outwardly joined or not to any particular society of Christians. But so far was this from being the case, that their Catechumens, whatever appearances they had of piety, were never accounted church-members, or stiled by them Christians or Brethren (*d*). For the same reason, Schismatics, who, though agreeing with the church in doctrine and worship, had on other accounts separated from her, were reckoned by the fathers, no true Christians, but cut off from the body of Christ (*e*) : yea, destitute of love to God, and enemies to the Redeemer (*f*). They

(*c*) Besides several of the passages cited, § 2. from St. Augustine and others, see Augustin. doctrin. Christ. l. 3. c. 32. & de Bapt. contra Donat. l. 1. c. 17. l. 4. c. 16. l. 6. c. 8.

(*d*) Pfanner de Catechumenis. Bingham Orig. Eccles. l. 10. c. 1, 2. (*e*) Cyprian ep. 52. ad Antonianum, p. 73. Augustin. de unit. Eccles. c. 4.

(*f*) Cyprian ep. 72. ad Stephanum. Augustin. de bapt. contra Don. l. 3. c. 16. l. 4. c. 17. & contra Crescendum, l. 2. c. 10.

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would never have embraced this uncharitable and unscriptural hypothesis, had they acknowledged an invisible church, made up of good men of opposite sentiments and practice in matters of doubtful disputation. They rightly held that inward faith and holiness, as well as purity of worship, and a profession of orthodox sentiments, were requisite, in order to union with the church. But then, it soon became a generally received opinion, suggested perhaps rather by pride and party spirit, than Scripture or reason, that the proper form or essence of the church consisted in fellowship with the Apostolic churches: by which they meant subjection to Bishops lawfully elected and ordained, and invested in their office by the apostles, or their successors in uninterrupted succession: as also union and agreement with other lawful Bishops, and the churches under their care.

§ 5. The greater part of modern Christians, have, I acknowledge, in their sentiments of the nature of the church, widely deviated from Scripture and antiquity. And the fiction of a visible church, really in covenant with God, and yet partly made up of hypocrites, has almost universally prevailed. What were the causes of this, I stay not to enquire. One thing however deserves to be remarked. Truth, in this particular, has gained signal advantages over vulgar prejudice and systematic ideas, even where it has not enabled men entirely to shake off these fetters. Many able Lutheran divines, who espouse the common distinction of a visible and invisible church, and warmly oppose the Calvinist doctrine of the perseverance of Saints, have notwithstanding asserted and proved, that the proper

notion of the word Church, in the New Testament, is, the congregation of the inwardly sanctified, or, as others express it, those elected to eternal life, and against whom the gates of hell shall never prevail. The Reader may consult Jo. Gerhardi *loci Communes*, tom. V. *Loc. de Ecclesia*, § 50. p. 241. Seb. Schmidii *Collegium Biblicum posterius loc. 16. dict. 1. § 20, 21.* Davidis Hollazii, *Examen Theologicum acroamaticum*, Part. 4. cap. 1. quæst. 3, 4, 14. Jo. Fr. Buddei, *Instit. Theol. Dogmaticæ*, l. 5. c. 3. § 2. not. ***: the length of which passages, would too much swell this work, and therefore forbids my transcribing them. Nay, Arminian writers have strongly argued against Popish Divines, that God alone knows who are members of the church, because inward faith and purity, though indispensibly requisite for church-membership, are invisible to the human eye. See Limborchii *Theologia Christiana*, l. 7. c. 13. § 18. & seq. Nor have there been wanting writers, no way inferior to the best and wisest of the fathers, who have more thoroughly adopted their ideas on this subject. I might mention many great and good men in both Englands, who have defended the congregational plan of church-government (ff), or the exclusive right of true believers to the Lord's Supper. The learned Vitringa has cast considerable light on this subject in his *Observationes Sacrae*, l. 5. c. 7, 8, 9. But none have handled it with such accuracy of method, force of genius, extent of

(ff) The congregational plan of church-government, I am far from approving. But it is no reason with me, for rejecting an important truth, that congregational divines have asserted it.

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learning, and depth of judgment, as Hermannus Venema, an eminent professor of divinity in Holland. By his *Dissertationes Sacrae*, published at Harlingen 1731, I was first led to just sentiments of the opposite nature of the Jewish and Christian dispensations: and have received from them considerable assistance in composing this and the preceding Dissertation. With pleasure do I hearken to the voice of justice and gratitude in acknowledging these obligations, and returning my hearty thanks. Happy shall I be, if my feeble attempts to illustrate and strengthen his reasonings, to vindicate them against new objections, and to point out the important purposes for which his discoveries may be improved, are not wholly in vain.

SECTION VI.

§ 1. **T**HE account I have endeavoured to establish of the nature of the Christian church, however agreeable to Scripture and antiquity, has the misfortune to be diametrically opposite to the system advanced by the late learned and ingenious Dr. Taylor, in his Key to the Apostolic writings. A view of that celebrated work, shall close this Dissertation.

He rightly asserts, that men became members of the Christian church by faith, without the works of the law, no kind of obedience performed by them, whether perfect or imperfect, entitling them to that privilege, § 247. But then he reduces the privileges of the Christian church to little, and faith to still less.

The faith, according to our author, § 250, 251, which gave a person a place or standing in the Christian church, was a faith consistent with a man's remaining wicked and perishing eternally: being nothing more than a profession of faith in Christ as the Saviour of the world, considered simply, and separately from the fruits and effects of it. I need only refer my reader, for a confutation of this notion, to Section i. § 3. and Section iii. § 2. of this Dissertation, and to the account of the nature of Christian faith, Dissertation III.

By virtue however of such a faith, he tells us, all without distinction, are admitted to the church and covenant of God, and to all the honours, privileges and grants therewith connected, such as election, salvation, justification, adoption, sanctification, &c. But these privileges do not ascertain the favour of God in a future world.

Christians, though God's chosen people, may, and often do, misimprove them, and then, as other wicked people, must have the wrath of God for their portion, chap. ix.—Indeed, though election, salvation, &c. sound high, yet, when the Doctor comes to explain them, they amount to little more, than being delivered from the power of heathenish darkness, which many are who do not profess Christianity, as much as they who profess without believing it.

§ 2. There are two pillars, on which Dr. Taylor's system rests.

The first is this. God is said to elect, save, call, create, beget, nay, even to wash, purge, and sanctify the people of the Jews; and is spoke of as their God, Father and Husband: and they are

are termed his children, spouse, saints, a holy nation, &c. yet their being thus exalted in spiritual privileges, above other nations, did not ensure to them the continuance of God's favour. The most terrible judgments in time and eternity, were denounced against them, if they neglected duly to improve these privileges. And when disobedient to God's will, numbers of these, his chosen people, fell a sacrifice to his vengeance, *Key*, chap. ii, and iii. Now believing Gentiles are taken into that church and covenant, out of which the unbelieving Jews were cast; the visible kingdom of God, whereof the Jews were of old the only members, being now enlarged, to admit all, who believe in Christ, to the same, nay, to greater spiritual advantages than the Jews enjoyed, *Key*, chap. v. Since then Christians are taken into that kingdom, from which the unbelieving Jews were ejected, and since the privileges of Christians are expressed by the same phrases with those of the antient Jewish church; unless we admit a strange abuse of language, these phrases, when applied to them, and when applied to us, must convey the same general ideas. Christians therefore are God's elect, as selected from the rest of the world, and taken into his visible kingdom. God has saved, redeemed, created, begot them, as he has bought and rescued them from their wretched situation in heathen ignorance and idolatry. And they are saints, a holy nation, sanctified, washed, &c. as set apart and appropriated in a special manner to God's honour, service, and obedience, and as furnished with extraordinary means and motives to holiness. And as such privileges once belonged to every Jew, so now they belong to all professed

Christians, not even those excepted, who for misimproving, are threatned to have their candlestick removed out of her place, *Key*, chap. ii.

The Doctor's argument would have been fully conclusive, had he proved, that believing Gentiles are taken into a church and covenant, precisely the same with that out of which God cast the unbelieving Jews. This he has indeed attempted to prove, chap. v. § 66,—75. But some of his arguments only prove, that the Gentiles were received into the Abrahamic covenant, which, as appears from Gal. iii. 17. differs greatly from the covenant made with the Jews at mount Sinai. And if some of them seem to show, that Gentile converts are taken into the church and kingdom of God, out of which the Jews were cast: even that will make nothing for his purpose, as we have proved in the three first Sections of this Dissertation, that there was, in consequence of Christ's coming, an alteration of the constitution of God's kingdom, the character and privileges of his subjects, and the tenor by which they were to hold these privileges. One thing further I would here observe. They who, like Zacheus, were sons of Abraham, or members of the Jewish church, are spoke of as lost, Luke xix. 10. and as lost sheep, Matth. x. 6. xv. 24. In this view Christ came to save them. Consequently Christ's salvation, or the blessings of the New Testament, were what they had no interest in, tho' members of the Jewish church. That visible kingdom of God, of which every true Christian is a member, is therefore totally different in its nature, from that kingdom out of which the unbelieving Jews were cast. Men in

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the one, might be in a lost condition. Of those in the other salvation was the common privilege.

I acknowledge the state, membership, privileges, honours, and relations of Christians, are expressed by the same phrases with those of the antient Jewish church. Yet, there is no abuse of language, though these phrases convey very different ideas, when applied to these different cases. If a covenant securing outward privileges, typified a spiritual dispensation; the same phrases, when applied to the first, must of necessity have a lower and meaner sense, than when applied to the second. Attention to this obvious remark, would have prevented the Doctor's leading his many followers into so wretched a labyrinth. The name Israel is often given to the Christian church, *Key*, § 75. Does it thence follow, that the Christian church, like the Jewish, was composed of Israel's natural seed? Our author will not say so. Why then is that name given to the Christian church? Doubtless, because Israel after the flesh typified that church. Just for the same reason, the privileges of the Jewish church, are often expressed in terms, which, in their full and more spiritual sense, are applicable only to true Christians.

§ 3. His second argument has a more specious appearance. The substance of it is, Those to whom Paul and the other apostles addressed their epistles, are spoke of in general as saints, called of Jesus, beloved of God, justified by faith, God's temple chosen in Christ, saved by grace, holy brethren, children of God, &c. Yet these very persons are exhorted to stand fast in the faith; and walk worthy of their christian vocation: and cautioned to take heed, least they fall, least any

any man beguile them of their reward; least being led aside by the error of the wicked, they fall from their own steadfastness; least sin should reign in their mortal bodies. Nay, they are told, if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die. He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption. If we deny Christ, he will also deny us. Election therefore, adoption, vocation, salvation, justification, sanctification, &c. are *antecedent blessings*, belonging at present to all Christians, even those, who for their wickedness do perish eternally; and do not import any thing necessarily and absolutely connected with a right temper and behaviour, with steadfastness in religion, and with the enjoyment of the heavenly bliss. *Key*, ch. x. xi. xii.

I acknowledge this reasoning is plausible, and merits a very particular and critical review: from which I think it will appear, that more than one link in the chain is faulty. The fact he alledges, cannot be disputed, that in the inscriptions of Paul's epistles, and other places of sacred writ, whole churches are termed holy, tho' doubtless there lurked in them many hypocrites. But in the inference from that fact, there is an evident mistake. In these very epistles characters peculiar to good men, are ascribed to the members of these churches, and is it not plain from this, that the apostles addressed them upon a charitable supposition, that they were inwardly pious. They did not consider *hypocrites*, tho' mingled with the church, as *constituting any part* of it: and therefore to have regarded them, in their descriptions of churches or addresses to them, would have been absurd. What has been advanced, Sect. i. § 3. seems sufficient to convince the

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the impartial, that those only are true members of the church, who are endued with the spirit and temper of Christ, and thereby secured against total and final apostacy. Yet as a further proof of what I assert, it may not be improper minutely to consider, what the apostles say, of the character and privileges of those, whom they address as members of the church of Christ.

§ 4. Paul addresses the members of the church at Rome, as men beloved of God, Rom. i. 7. who rejoiced in hope of the glory of God, v. 2. who had received the spirit of adoption, the spirit of God witnessing with their spirits that they were the children of God, yea heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ, who as they now suffered should hereafter be glorified with him, viii. 15, 16, 17. He thanks God, that they had obeyed from the heart the form of doctrine that had been delivered them, and were made free from sin, and become the servants of righteousness, vi. 17, 18. He assures them, tho' their sentiments about rites and ceremonies differed, yet that both parties acted from an honest and truly gracious principle, and as they lived to the Lord, so should die to him, xiv. 6, 7, 8. Nothing can be stronger than that expression, xv. 14. I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that you are full of goodness.

Many things are said to the Corinthians, plainly implying, that they were inwardly holy, and that their eternal happiness was secure: 1 Cor. i. 8. Who shall confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. Ver. 30. Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made to us wisdom, righteousness, sancti-

sanctification, and redemption. iii. 16. Know you not that ye are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you. Ver. 21—23. All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come. All are yours, and ye are Christ's. vi. 2. Do ye not know that *the saints* shall judge the world, and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matter? Ver. 11. Ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of our God. He urges their certain prospect of a glorious resurrection as an argument to steadfastness and vigour in the work of the Lord, xv. 49—58. In the 2d epistle, he writes in the same manner. 2 Cor. i. 7. Our hope of you is steadfast, knowing that as ye are partakers of the suffering, so shall you be also of the consolation. Ver. 14, 15. We are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours in the day of Jesus. And in this confidence I was minded to come unto you. Ver. 21, 22. Now he which established us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God, who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the spirit into our hearts. iii. 3. For as much as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but by the spirit of the living God, not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart. vi. 14. Be ye not unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what fellowship hath *righteousness* with unrighteousness?

It were easy to cite a multitude of similar passages from Paul's other epistles. Thus Gal. iv. 6, 7. Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth
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the spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore, thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then *an heir of God thro' Christ.* vi. 1. Brethren, if a man be overtaken with a fault, *ye which are spiritual,* restore such an one in the spirit of meekness. Compare Gal. v. 22, 23. The fruit of the spirit is meekness. Eph. i. 13, 14, 15. In whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession. Wherefore I also, after that I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you. Phil. i. 6. Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ. ii. 12, 13. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, as ye have always obeyed not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. iv. 19. My God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

Paul addressing the Colossians, i. 4, 5, 6. speaks of their faith in Christ, their love to all saints, the hope laid up for them in heaven, and the gospel's bringing forth fruit in them, since the day they knew the grace of God in truth; and tells them, iii. 3, 4. Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

1 Thess. i. 3—10. Remembring without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and
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patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father. ii. 13. For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because when ye received the word of God that ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of man, but as it is in truth the word of God, which effectually worketh in you that believe. Ver. 19. For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, at his coming? v. 4. Ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. v. 23, 24. The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it. 2 Thess. i. 3—7. he speaks of the great increase of their faith and charity, and their patience in persecution and tribulation, as manifest tokens of their interest in the heavenly rest. 2 Thess. iii. 3. But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil.

The other apostles wrote in the same strain, acknowledging the truly godly alone, as members of the christian Church. Peter, 1 epist. i. 5, 8, 22. addresses the dispersed strangers, as persons who were kept by the power of God thro' faith unto salvation: who loved Christ, and believing, rejoiced in him, with joy unspeakable and full of glory: and as having purified their souls in obeying the truth thro' the spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren. ii. 5. Ye also as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Ver. 7. Un-

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to you therefore which believe he (i. e. Christ) is precious. 2 Pet. i. 1, 12. Peter describes those to whom he writes, as having obtained like precious faith with the apostles, as knowing religion, and as established in the present truth: and iii. 1. represents it as the design of both his epistles, to stir up their pure minds by way of remembrance.

1 John ii. 12, 13, 14. I write unto you, because your sins are forgiven you, because ye have known him that is from the beginning, because ye have overcome that wicked one, and because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you. Ib. ver. 27. But the anointing, which ye have received of him, abideth in you, and you need not that any man teach you. But as the same anointing teacheth of all things, and is truth, and no lie; and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him. iv. 4. Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.

But to multiply particular citations is needless. The spirit and frame of the epistles would be perfectly unaccountable, should we suppose them partly addressed to hypocrites and self-deceivers, who had the form, but were strangers to the power of godliness, and thus were every moment in danger of dropping into the pit of destruction. Doubtless, had that been the case, they would have been calculated, as sermons recorded in other parts of scripture directed to such people are, to awaken in them a sense of their hazardous condition, and to excite them to fly from the wrath to come.

Every

Every particular church mentioned in the New Testament, is described as consisting of persons united to Christ by faith and love, and inwardly holy. We must either say, that in these times, no hypocrites were intermixed with the church; or that, tho' intermixed with it, they were no part of it. The first is improbable. The instance of Simon the forcerer proves, that in admitting men to the church, the apostles did not always act by the gift of discerning spirits. Paul considers it as possible, that men might give all their goods to feed the poor, and their bodies to be burned, who yet wanted charity, 1 Cor. xiii. 3. Ananias and Sapphirah, Hymenæus and Alexander were for a time deemed sincere by their fellow professors. Peter does not pretend to an absolute knowledge of Sylvanus's uprightness, but only says of him, By Sylvanus a faithful brother to you as I suppose, 1 Pet. v. 12. Since then the apostles addressed societies in different places outwardly associated for divine worship, by properties peculiar to good men, it follows, that they considered none else as members of these societies.

I am aware, that in reproving or commending, the sacred oracles sometimes speak as if all were intended, when they only mean the greater part, e. g. Gen. vi. 12. 1 Chr. xiv. 17. Jer. ix. 26. Matth. xxi. 26. But if accounting in that way for the favourable character given the members of the apostolic churches, would remove the present objection to Dr. Taylor's scheme, let it be remembered, it would also deprive that scheme of its chief support, the argument I mean from whole churches being described as elected, saved, sanctified, &c. Besides it is far from being certain, that

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that even in the apostolic churches, the greater part was always true believers. The state of the primitive churches was not so pure, as many paint it, when Paul wrote thus to the Philippians, speaking of Timothy, Phil. ii. 20, 21. For I have no man like minded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.

After all, we are not left to conjecture the cause, of the ascribing the graces of the spirit to whole churches, in the epistles. 1 John ii. 19. plainly solves this doubt, and assures us, that these only, who have an abiding principle of holiness, are true members of the church. The heathens seem to have accused the christian church, as harbouring in her bosom, men of the most corrupt sentiments and abandoned lives, meaning probably the Gnostics, who a little before had separated from the church. To this the apostle replies, "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest, that they were not all of us." These men were never true church members. They have indeed unjustly intermingled themselves with the society of Christians. But their leaving that society evidences, that they never had a just claim to make a part of it, altho' for a season they wore the garb of it, and seemed to belong to it in the eyes of the world. For every true member of the church, is by faith united to Christ, and thereby secured from apostacy. These therefore who apostatize, manifest by their apostacy, that they were never true members of the church. Agreeably to this, we

are told, Heb. iii. 6. that they only are Christ's house, who hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.

Our communion therefore with professed Christians, is only conditional. We account them members of Christ's mystical body, and love and esteem them as such, on supposition, that their profession is genuine. Churches therefore ought to put away from among them, those whose profession is discovered by their practice to have been unsincere. To renounce fellowship with such, christian charity forbids not, nay duty requires. On the other hand, in separating from a corrupt church, we only separate from it, in so far as it is corrupt, and still maintain inward fellowship with such of its members, as love our Lord Jesus in sincerity, tho' with their errors we have no fellowship.

Imagine not then, that to be in the church is to be in such or such a place or company. No. It is to be members of the mystical body of Christ, united by faith to him, and by love to our fellow christians. If Christ dwells in our hearts by faith, and we are rooted, and grounded in love, we belong to the church, tho' we were banished to the most solitary wilderness. If faith and love are not in us, we belong not to that sacred society, tho' we had associated ourselves with the apostles; nay, tho' as Judas, we had attended Christ during the whole of his public ministry.

§ 5. Thus I have sufficiently proved, that they only were considered by the apostles, as true members of the church, who were endued with the temper and spirit of Christ, and thereby secured against total and final apostacy. The cau-

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tions in the epistles against apostacy, neither prove that bad men were considered as christians, nor that good men may finally fall away. They were proper however on two accounts: to awaken from carnal security, hypocrites and self deceivers, intermingled with, tho' not truly members of the church: and to promote the good behaviour, and secure the perseverance of real Christians. An event may be absolutely secured by the divine decree, and yet in order to bring it about, a particular mean may be absolutely necessary. Paul had assured those in the ship with him, that there should be no loss of any man's life among them, Acts xxvii. 22—25. and yet when the shipmen were about to fly from the ship, he says to the centurion, and to the soldiers, except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved, ib. ver. 31. In like manner tho' Christ gives to his sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, yet diligence and watchfulness are necessary as means of their preservation.

SECTION VII.

§ 1. **T**HIS much shall suffice in answer to Dr. Taylor's general arguments. Tho' my cause does not require it, yet for the fuller conviction of sincere enquirers after truth, I shall now subjoin some positive evidences, that election, vocation, salvation, adoption, and other blessings which the Doctor terms antecedent, are not to be understood in the low sense in which he represents them.

I begin with *Election*. Peter says, 1 epist. v. 13. The church that is at Babylon elected together

gether with you saluteth you. If elected means separated from the rest of the world, and taken into God's visible kingdom, then elected together with you must mean, converted at the same time that you were to the profession of christianity. And then we must suppose, what is by no means probable, that the conversion of the church at Babylon, and of the numerous strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, was of the same precise date. (Apo)

Again we are exhorted, 2 Pet. i. 10. to give all diligence to make our calling and election sure. If election and vocation mean no more, than Dr. Taylor alledges, then Christians are there exhorted to make it sure that they profess christianity, for which purpose, one would think, no great diligence was requisite. That passage must therefore mean, ascertaining by holiness of heart and life, that we have been elected to eternal happiness, and made meet for it by converting grace. Thus by the effects, the cause is certainly known, and by the streams we are led to the fountain. It was in this way that Paul tells the Thessalonians, 1 Thess. i. 4—10. he knew their election of God, even from the powerful influence of the gospel on their temper and conduct.

Election evidently means the eternal decree of God, to give grace and glory to a certain number of mankind: Eph. i. 4. According as he hath chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love. 2 Thess. ii. 13. God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, thro' sanctification of the spirit and belief

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belief of the truth. *From the beginning* does not mean from the first preaching of the gospel, but from eternity, in which sense the phrase is used, 1 John ii. 13. Mic. v. 1. For God's calling them by the gospel is clearly distinguished from this choosing them from the beginning, ver. 14.

§ 2. In what sense Christians are called, I have explained, Section i. § 3. From the passage, 2 Pet. i. 10. cited above, we may learn, with how little ground the Doctor asserts (*Key*, ch. 6. § 79.) that called only means brought out of heathenism, and invited and made welcome to the honours and privileges of God's people: and (note on Rom. viii. 28.) that effectual calling is a distinction divines have invented without any warrant from scripture. I would seek no better warrant, than the scripture to which that note is subjoined. Does not the apostle say, that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are called according to his purpose? and is this true of all, who are brought out of heathenism, and invited to the privileges of God's people? Indeed the end of the 8th chapter of the Romans is so full against the Doctor's hypothesis, that his paraphrase and notes upon it are a mass of confusion; and after all the freedom he takes to supply the text, it remains a plain contradiction to his favourite system, that saints may finally perish. He says (note on Rom. viii. 28.) Whatever befalls us, suppose we love God, certainly concurs and tends, to compleat our salvation; and on ver. 29, 30. suppose that we love God, it is certain from our being called, that we shall be glorified with the Son of God. It is true, he insinuates in his paraphrase on ver. 35. not very

consistently with these assertions, that Christians may lose this love to Christ by not endeavouring sincerely to cleave to him in purity and obedience.

We read Heb. ix. 15. of Christ's dying, that they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. And Rom. viii. 30. speaks of a calling infallibly connected with glorification. "Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." Dr. Taylor indeed, artfully enough disguises that connection, by the turn he has given in his paraphrase to the last clause. "Whom he purposed thus to justify, upon their due improvement of this his grace to them, he purposed to give eternal life and glory." But, there is nothing in the text, answering to these words, "upon their due improvement of his grace." He makes no such supplement to any of the other clauses, as indeed, consistently with his own scheme, he could not. The connection of justifying and glorifying, is expressed in the very same terms, as the connection of calling and justification. Can then, the Doctor's supplement to the last clause, flow from any thing, unless desire to varnish over a difficulty too hard for him to resolve?

It is said, 1 Cor. ii. 26. "Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called." The wise, the mighty, the noble, had the outward call of the gospel as well as the poor. The apostle therefore speaks of an effectual calling, in virtue of which men be-

come

come sincere Christians, and of which at that time, few in high life were sharers.

§ 3. *Adoption* and *regeneration* are privileges absolutely connected with eternal life, Rom. viii. 17. If children, then heirs. What they are heirs of, the scripture abundantly declares. They are heirs according to the promise, Gal. iii. 29. Heirs of promise, Heb. vi. 17. i. e. of every blessing contained in the promise, which God at first made to fallen man, and has since confirmed by his oath. Heirs of salvation, Heb. i. 14. Heirs of the grace of life, 1 Pet. iii. 9. Heirs according to the hope of eternal life, Tit. iii. 7. Heirs of righteousness, Heb. xi. 7. Heirs of the kingdom which God hath promised, Ja. ii. 6. and as immediately follows, Rom. viii. 17. Heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.

Christians are represented, 1 Pet. i. 3, 4. as begotten again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.

But John's first epistle contains the fullest and plainest proofs, that only persons of true piety are born of God, and that all such shall finally persevere. Thus iii. 9, 10. "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil. Whosoever doeth not righteousness, is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother." v. 4. "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Ib. v. 18. "We know, that whosoever is born of God sinneth not: but

“he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and
 “that wicked one toucheth him not.” iii. 2. “Be-
 “loved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth
 “not yet appear what we shall be: but we know,
 “that when he shall appear, we shall be like him,
 “for we shall see him as he is.” The truth is, the
 whole of that epistle seems in the directest manner
 calculated to thwart Dr. Taylor’s scheme. And one
 would think a person of the meanest understand-
 ing, who has read it, would scarce have the con-
 fidence to assert, as that able critic does, c. 12.
 § 236. that the apostles with one consent, assign
 the blessings of election, adoption, regeneration,
 &c. to all professed Christians without excep-
 tion, never raising any scruple or difficulty about
 any Christian’s interest in or right to them, no
 not in the case of sinning a sin, except that of
 apostacy. However, it must be owned he has
 managed this difficulty with abundance of ad-
 dress. And, if you allow him a liberty, which
 he has unjustly accused the Calvinist divines for
 taking in the case of effectual calling, that, I
 mean, of feigning unscriptural distinctions, his
 scheme is safe, spite of St. John, by a notable
 discovery, that men may be born of God in a
 less, and in a more eminent sense, ch. 11. § 219.
 For, if you insert in John’s epistle *born of God*
in the most eminent sense, then, consistently enough
 with that apostle, men of bad characters, and
 who shall finally perish, may be born of God
 in the less eminent sense, to which the rest of
 the apostles, when they speak of adoption refer;
 certainly, it is so. And that man must have a
 wretched genius, who if allowed to add words
 and sentences to the bible, cannot bring it with
 ease to speak what language is most agreeable to
 him.

him. The only question is, if indeed that is a question, whether such liberty can be fairly taken. But whether it can, or cannot, Dr. Taylor, after straining at a gnat on another occasion, has in this instance swallowed a camel. He would not understand elect, called, saved, created, sons of God, &c. differently in the Old Testament which related to a typical dispensation, and in the New which relates to the dispensation typified; because it would be a strange abuse of words, to express by the same phrases, ideas not generically the same. But he finds no difficulty in supposing, that two apostles of Christ writing under the same dispensation, affix to the same words ideas totally different, without giving the least hint of this, to prevent men from doing, what without such caution they unavoidably would do, I mean, understanding them as speaking of the same thing.

§ 4. Christians, according to Dr. Taylor, ch. vi. § 100. are said to be *washed* and *sanctified*, because by the will of God, they are set apart and appropriated in a special manner to his honour, service and obedience, and furnished with extraordinary means and motives to holiness—Here permit me to enquire, If these expressions have no higher an import, why did Christ tell his disciples, John xiii. 10. “Ye are clean, but not all?” Were they not all especially appropriated to his service, and furnished with extraordinary means and motives to holiness? Yet Christ expressly says, ye are not all clean, because he knew there was a hypocrite among them; and it was not till Judas went out, and none save true believers were present, that he

says, John xv. 3. "Now ye are clean, through
"the word which I have spoken unto you."

It is said, 1 Cor. vi. 9—11. "Know ye not
"that the unrighteous shall not inherit the king-
"dom of God? Be not deceived: neither for-
"nicators, nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor
"effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with
"mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor
"drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners shall
"inherit the kingdom of God. And such were
"some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are
"sanctified, but ye are justified in the name
"of the Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of our
"God." Does not the opposition between the
character in the 9th and 10th, and that in the
11th verse strongly imply, that the washed and
sanctified, were once the slaves of these shocking
vices, but after they were washed and sanctified,
did not, nay could not remain under that wretch-
ed thralldom?

Again it is said, Tit. iii. 3—5. "For we our-
"selves also were sometimes foolish and disobe-
"dient, deceived, serving divers lusts and plea-
"sures, living in malice and envy, hateful and
"hating one another. But after that the kind-
"ness and love of God our Saviour towards
"man appeared, not by works of righteous-
"ness, which we have done, but according to
"his mercy he saved us, by the washing of re-
"generation and renewing of the Holy Ghost."
Is it not clear, from this passage, that men by
the washing of regeneration, and renewing of
the Holy Ghost, are saved from the dominion of
sin, and no more remain as before, foolish, dis-
obedient, deceived, serving diverse lusts and
pleasures?

§ 5. When church members are said to be saved, this according to our author (*Key*, ch. vi. § 78.) means no more than that they were rescued from idolatry, and brought into the light and privileges of the gospel.—I acknowledge, men are saved, when they come to the knowledge of the truth, 1 Tim. ii. 4. But it is, when they come to such a knowledge of its certainty, beauty, and glory, as purifies the heart, and makes them partakers of a divine nature. The salvation of the Gentiles, Rom. xi. 11. means their conversion from sin to God. For Israel's being saved, Rom. xi. 26. is explained by ungodliness being turned away from them. A Jew might be saved from Egypt. But Christ saves his people from their sins, Matth. i. 21. blesses them in turning away every one of them from their iniquities, Acts iii. 26. and is the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him, and to none else, Heb. v. 9. The gospel salvation must therefore be far from the wicked, Ps. cxix. 155. I have shewn more at large, in what sense Christ is the Saviour of the world, and Christians partake of salvation in the following Dissertation.

§ 6. Church members in general said to be *justified by faith*. According to Dr. Taylor, this implies no more than deliverance from the power of heathenish darkness, being admitted into the church and covenant of God, and that general pardon, which God granted to the heathen world upon their professed faith in Christ: but by no means relates to, or secures that second justification, or acquittance at the day of judgment, which we are told, is not by faith only, but the issue of a persevering obedience, Math. xii. 37.

Jam. ii. 24. The substance of his reasoning, in support of this notion, is, The Greek and Hebrew words, which we translate righteousness, when applied to God, frequently signify, that goodness, mercy, favour, by which he saves from any enemy, danger, or evil: and hence are used to signify the deliverance itself, which the benignity of God thus vouchsafes. Conformably to this, to be justified or made righteous, is to be saved from any evil, or to obtain any blessing, whether spiritual or temporal. It is not therefore to be thought strange, if Paul should apply these terms, to the important affair of our deliverance from heathenish darkness, and admission into the church and covenant of God; and the rather, because by that very word, the grant of covenant blessings to Abraham is signified, Gen. xv. 6; because the admission of the Gentiles into the church, is expressed in other terms full as strong, e. g. being saved, Rom. x. 1. xi. 26. 1 Thess. ii. 16; obtaining mercy, Rom. xi. 30. 1 Pet. ii. 10; and the purpose of receiving them into the church is termed election, Rom. ix. 11, 16. xi. 5, 6. Nor was Paul's pains in proving, that by faith only we are received into the church and covenant of God, unnecessary, as the Jews so warmly inculcated, that circumcision and obedience to the law were necessary for that purpose, (*Key*, ch. 16, 17.)

As to the general pardon granted to the heathen world, upon their professed faith, there is not the least foundation for it in the Bible. God cannot justify and condemn the same persons. But he that believeth not, tho' he may profess to believe, is condemned already. There is now

no

no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit. But against every one who walketh after the flesh, whatever his profession be, a sentence of condemnation stands in full force. I need not however say much in opposition to this notion of justification, as it is another notion of it still lower, deliverance from heathenish darkness and admission into the church and covenant of God, which our author chiefly labours to establish.

To consider all the texts he has cited, in proof that *righteous* signifies merciful and kind, and *righteousness* mercy and benignity, would be tedious. In most of them, these words either denote justice in its common acceptation; or a title to blessings, whether temporal, or spiritual; or that, which sounds a title to heavenly blessings, even the sufferings and obedience of Christ. In some of them it means vindictive justice, or the righteousness of God, as pleading the just cause of his people, and avenging them on their enemies. And this is the sense of it, Judg. v. 11. Psal. ciii. 6. Is. li. 27; lvi. 1; lix. 16. Indeed, in the four last texts, the LXX. instead of δικαιοσυνη have ελεημοσυνη or ελεος, as in other passages of that translation, δικαιοσυνη may mean kindness or mercy. But it is sufficient, that תְּקַדֵּשׁ has no such sense in the Hebrew, except perhaps where it is intimated, that extreme necessity gives a just claim to alms. On which account, Solomon says, Prov. iii. 27. Withhold not good מִיְּדְּיָמֶיךָ from the Lords thereof, i. e. from these, whom God constitutes by their necessity the Lords of the withheld good. The mistake of the LXX. might flow from this,

that מַצְוָה signifies the ground of our acceptance with God, which those interpreters, tinctured with that scheme, which afterwards distinguished the sect of the Pharisees, imagined was alms, and other acts of mercy. Just as the Talmudical writers, from the same notion of the merit of good works, term alms מַצְוָה. See Lightfoot horæ Hebraicæ ad Matth. vi. 1. and Luke xi. 41.

His attempt to prove, that *δικαιωθείς* may signify to be saved or delivered, is still more feeble: for, in the passages cited by him, that word either signifies, being acquitted from the guilt of sin, and entitled to the divine favour, or having our character vindicated and justified before men. The first of these is the sense of the word, in Isa. xlv. 25. Acts xiii. 39. and Rom. vi. 7. The second in John ii. 25. Dr. Taylor explains that passage thus: "Was not Rahab the harlot justified, (i. e. delivered, or saved from the destruction in which Jericho was involved) by works, when she had received the messengers, and sent them out another way." I stay not to remark, the Doctor's inconsistency with himself, as he elsewhere asserts, that James, in this chapter, treats of the second justification, or final acquittance at the day of judgment. It is enough to my present purpose, that both interpretations are inconsistent with truth. The evident meaning of the apostle is, "Was not the sincerity of Rahab the harlot's professed faith in the God of Israel, justified by her receiving the spies, and sending them out another way." Turn to the immediately preceding verse: "See then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." Justified cannot there mean delivered

delivered from outward calamities, for from these neither the faith of Christians, nor their good works deliver. Unless therefore, we charge the apostle, with a strange inaccuracy of method, and abuse of language, he would not argue, that Christians are justified by works, from Rahab's being justified by them, if justified, as applied to her, had an idea noways analogous to what it bears as applied to Christians. Equally clear it is, that James does not speak of a secondary justification in Dr. Taylor's sense of that phrase. For when Rahab had received the messengers, and sent them out another way, she had not as yet preserved her faith and holiness to the end of her life.

It is further pleaded, that justification may mean no more than admission into the church, because that admission is expressed in terms full as strong, *e. g.* being saved and obtaining mercy; nay, the purpose of that admission is termed election.—Which of these phrases is strongest, I will not determine. The weakest of them is too strong, to import admission to the church, as understood by the Doctor. But if you understand by the church, what the apostles understood by it, I shall be as free as any to acknowledge, that election means the divine purpose of bestowing upon men church privileges, justification the being intitled to them, and salvation and obtaining mercy the actual enjoyment of them.

If the Jews asserted that circumcision and obedience to the law, were necessary for admission to God's church and covenant, they also asserted that they were necessary to entitle to eternal life. It cannot therefore be inferred from their senti-

ments, that the first is the sense of justification, rather than the second.

But the fifth chapter of the epistle to the Romans is a sufficient confutation of the notion, that justification by faith does not secure acquittance at the day of judgment. The apostle having established in the preceding chapters, that grand and important doctrine of Christianity, that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law, infers from it, in the fifth chapter, the happiness of the justified, particularly in verse 2. their rejoicing in hope of future glory. And that this joy had a solid foundation, or, in other words, 2 that the justified could not fail of attaining eternal life, he proves from four arguments. (1.) Because even tribulation, which was a curse under the Sinai covenant, was to believers in Jesus a real blessing, ver. 3,—5. (2.) Because that love, which God bears them, and, in consequence of which, they shall be eternally happy, is ascertained to them, and the joyful sense of it shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost, ver. 5. at the end. (3.) If the effect of the death of Christ was, that thereby ungodly sinners and enemies were justified and reconciled: much more, through the life of Christ, shall those now reconciled, be eternally happy, ver. 6—11. The Doctor himself thus paraphrases the latter part of ver. 10. “Much more now, that we are actually turned to God, by receiving the gospel preached to us, may we assure ourselves, we shall obtain eternal salvation, by that life and power to which our Saviour is exalted.” (4.) If by Adam’s first sin, not only a sentence of condemnation was passed on his posterity, but the

the penal effects thereof have actually reached them, in consequence of his sin being imputed to them, much more shall the blessings merited by Christ's obedience, be conferred on all for whom he obeyed. Thus the whole of that chapter seems directly calculated, to confute Dr. Taylor's scheme, that the justified may finally perish.

He has indeed endeavoured to give that chapter a very different turn. According to him, ver. 11—21. contains a third argument, that divine grace and justification reach to all mankind, even uncircumcised Gentiles as well as the Jews; which may be reduced to this syllogism. The consequences of Christ's obedience extend as far as those of Adam's disobedience. But the consequences of Adam's disobedience extend to all mankind. Therefore, so do the consequences of Christ's obedience.—Need I tell my reader, what is extremely obvious, that this would be proving a thing, by taking it for granted? For, if the Jews denied, that the Gentiles were justified by faith, they equally denied that Christ's obedience was the foundation of justification or church privileges; imagining those privileges founded, either on their own merit, the merit of their forefathers, or the particular affection of God for their nation.

But the true sense of justification, as importing a complete and effectual right to the pardon of sin, and to all the blessings of grace and glory, through the blood and merits of Jesus, has been so fully vindicated, and the distinction of a first and secondary justification, so thoroughly refuted, by a multitude of Calvinist and Lutheran divines, in their writings against Papists and Arminians, and

and in their systems of divinity, that my entering upon that argument is happily superseded.

SECTION VIII.

§ I. **T**HERE are some Scriptures, in Dr. Taylor's pompous collection of texts, which merit particular remark, as on a superficial view, they may appear to give considerable countenance to his scheme.

Contentions are enumerated among the works of the flesh, Gal. v. 19, 20, 21. and yet it is said of the Corinthians, 1 Cor. i. 11. There are contentions among you; and iii. 3. Whereas there are among you envyings and strifes, and divisions, are ye not carnal? And vi. 8. Ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren. (*Key*, chap. x. § 158.)—This is no doubt meant to insinuate, that some in the church of Corinth lived after the flesh, and were habitually unjust. Had that been indeed the case, after the apostle had solemnly declared, that the unrighteous and voluptuous are excluded from the kingdom of God, would he have added? Such were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, &c. i. e. once you were among the unrighteous and voluptuous, but now ye are of another and a better spirit and behaviour. Would he not rather have told them, as truth and ministerial faithfulness required, such are some of you? Indeed there is little difficulty in the case. Solomon tells us, Eccles. vii. 20. There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good and sinneth not. And Paul, Gal. v. 17. The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh: and

these are contrary the one to the other ; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. Let the first epistle to the Corinthians explain itself, iii. 1. And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. By carnality he means the weakness, not the want of a principle of divine life in their hearts. And from this carnality, daily experience shews, the greatest part of sincere Christians can seldom get wholly free. Again ; The doing wrong and defrauding, with which he charges them, was going to law with their brethren, before unbelievers, 1 Cor. vi. 6—8. This was doing wrong to the church, and defrauding it of due honour ; for it was insinuating, that there was not a wise man among them, able to judge between his brethren. And it might often be doing wrong to the brother, with whom they went to law. This was surely a fault, yet, probably, not a presumptuous one. Self-interest, as well as a bribe, blindeth the eyes of the wise, and leadeth men to fancy a clear title, where, in fact, there is none.

The apostle supposes the Galatians in great danger of finishing in the flesh, Gal. iii. 3. of falling from grace, and of having Christ become of no effect to them, Gal. v. 4. *Key*, chap. x. § 166.—The meaning of the first passage is evidently this. Having embraced Christianity, and received in consequence of this the saving influences and miraculous gifts of the spirit, do you think to perfect your condition by returning to that carnal dispensation, in which there was no such ministration of the word ?—The other passage is not an address to true Christians. He had indeed said to them, ver. 2. If ye be circumcised,

cised, Christ shall profit you nothing. He warns them of their danger, being jealous over them with a godly jealousy. Yet he entertained good hopes of them, ver. 10. "I have confidence in you through the Lord, that ye will be none otherwise minded." From them he turns to such, who, though they had not renounced the Christian name, yet had apostatized from the true gospel of Christ, or were enticing others to such apostacy, ver. 3, 4. "For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law, ye are fallen from grace," i. e. ye are fallen from the doctrine of grace. And then he returns again to true Christians, whom he opposes to those whom he had thus warned, ver. 5. "For we, through the Spirit, wait for the hope of righteousness by faith."

2 Peter ii. 22—23. speaks of Christians, who had escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of Christ, and were again entangled therein and overcome, and after having known the way of righteousness, have turned aside from the holy commandment. *Key*, chap. xi. § 215.—It speaks of men who had done so. But least we should imagine, that these men were ever real Christians, renewed in the spirit of their minds, he assigns it as the cause of their apostacy, that their doggish and swinish nature had always remained the same, and that their reformation and good behaviour was merely external, ver. 22. "It is happened to them according to the true proverb, the dog is turned to his vomit again, and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire."

Paul

Paul tells Timothy, 2 Tim. ii. 10. "I endure
 " all things for the Elect's sake, that they may
 " also obtain the Salvation, which is Christ Jesus,
 " with eternal glory." This shews, it is one
 thing to be elect; and another thing to obtain
 that salvation which is connected with eternal
 glory, *Key*, chap. xi. § 195. — Undoubtedly it
 does. But does it also shew, that those privi-
 leges, though different, are not necessarily con-
 nected? To prove this, would have been more
 for the Doctor's purpose; but, I apprehend, not
 so easy. This passage no more proves, that the
 elect may fail of eternal glory, than Christ's en-
 during suffering, that God might be glorified in
 man's salvation, proves, that the whole of man-
 kind may eternally perish, and God reap no glory
 from that astonishing transaction.

§ 2. Dr. Taylor's scheme obliges him to con-
 sider grace to persevere in religion, as a privi-
 lege not necessarily connected with election,
 adoption, vocation, and other blessings, which
 he calls antecedent: but as consequent blessings,
 depending on the precarious condition of our im-
 provement of the antecedent blessings, common
 to all Christians. Accordingly, he places, in his
 collection of texts relating to antecedent bles-
 sings, these following: 1 Cor. i. 8. "Who
 " shall also confirm you to the end, that ye may
 " be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus
 " Christ." 1 Thess. v. 23, 24. "And the very
 " God of peace sanctify you wholly: and I pray
 " God your whole spirit and soul, and body, be
 " preserved blameless unto the coming of our
 " Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth
 " you, who also will do it." 2 Thess. iii. 3.
 "But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you
 " and

consequent

“and keep you from evil.” Phil. i. 6. “Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” 1 Pet. i. 5. “Who are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time.”—And yet these promises plainly relate to church-members without exception, at least as much as the epithets elect, sanctified, &c. do. The Doctor, however, judged wisely in overlooking this circumstance, which, if he attended to, he could not but be conscious, would do no service to his scheme of sanctified Christians eternally perishing. For if his collection of texts, on antecedent blessings, proves, that all to whom the apostles directed their epistles, was considered by them as elected, sanctified, called, &c. which I readily allow; these texts equally prove, that persevering grace was a part of the common portion of Christians.

But the Lord is faithful, who shall establish you
 Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that call-
 eth you unto the coming of our
 Lord your whole spirit and soul, and body, be
 God of peace sanctify you wholly: and I pray
 Christ. 1 Thess. v. 23. 24. “And the very
 “be blessed in the day of our Lord Jesus
 “I shall also confirm you to the end, that ye may
 long, there followeth 1 Cor. x. 8. “Who
 collection of texts relating to antecedent bless-
 to all Christians. Accordingly, the place, is in
 provement of the antecedent blessings, common
 depending on the precious condition of our in-
 he calls antecedent: but as antecedent blessings
 which, and other blessings, which

D I S-



DISSERTATION III.

The Nature of CHRISTIAN FAITH.

SECTION I.

§ 1. **F**AITH or Belief, in strict propriety of speech, is that credit we give to the testimony of one, in whose knowledge of what he testifies, and in whose integrity we confide. Though often it is used in a sense less proper, and denotes in general persuasion or assent, whether founded upon testimony or intrinsic evidence.

The Holy Ghost in the sacred oracles means to be understood, and therefore speaks to men in their own language, and uses words in their common acceptance. Faith therefore in the Scripture does not signify, choice, affection, temper, or behaviour; for, in common language, it does not signify these: but merely persuasion or assent, and commonly a persuasion founded on testimony.

The meaning of the word *believe*, in the following Scriptures, is plain to the most cursory reader: Exod. iv. 1. But behold they will not believe me. *Ib.* ver. 5. That they may believe that the LORD God of their fathers hath appeared unto thee. 1 Sam. xxvii. 12. And Achish believed David, saying, he hath made his people Israel

Israel utterly to abhor him. Prov. xxvi. 25. When he speaketh fair, believe him not. Habuk. i. 5. I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be told you. John iv. 21. Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. James ii. 19. Thou believest that there is one God; the devils also believe, and tremble. I may venture to say, if Christians had consulted systems less, and Scripture and their own experience more, they would not have affixed to believing in other passages, a sense entirely different from what it bears in these.

Faith purifies the heart, Acts xv. 9. worketh by love, Gal. v. 6. and discovers itself sincere by the performance of good works, Ja. ii. 18. Faith therefore is not holiness, love, or new obedience, unless the effect is the same with the cause, or the evidence with the thing proved. He who confounds faith with any of these, might as well plead, that there is no difference between the sun in the firmament, and the fruits of the earth, brought forth and ripened by his genial rays: or between natural life, and the actions of a living man. And yet many writers, on the nature of faith, seem to have forgot that it is one question, what is faith; and another, what is inseparably connected with it, and what are the fruits that spring from it?

That saving faith is properly an assent, is further evident, because it is often termed knowledge: Isa. liii. 11. By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many. John xvii. 3. This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. 1 Tim. ii.

4. Who will have all men to be saved, and to
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come to the knowledge of the truth. 2 Pet. i. 2, 3. Grace and peace be multiplied unto you, through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord; according as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to virtue and glory. In these passages knowledge must mean faith, because the distinguishing properties, attendants, and consequences of faith, are ascribed to it, in them. In other Scriptures, knowledge means a clear undoubted persuasion. Thus, 2 Cor. v. 11. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men. 1 Thess. v. 2. For yourselves know perfectly, that the day of the Lord so cometh, as a thief in the night. 2 Tim. i. 12. I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day. 1 John ii. 21. I have not written unto you, because ye know not the truth: but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth. Why then should not knowledge mean persuasion, in the Scriptures, where it is put for faith?

§ 2. Other ideas of faith, substituted in the place of persuasion, are better calculated to flatter the pride of man, that his acceptance with God is founded on something worthy and excellent in the frame of his mind, in the choice of his will, and in the byass of his affections. For that very reason, these ideas must be false. The office assigned to faith in the plan of salvation, is assigned it for this purpose, that all pretences to merit may be borne down, and the sovereignty and freedom of God's grace in bestowing salvation may appear. Rom. iv. 16. "Therefore it
"is

"is of faith, that it might be by grace." Faith has no moral efficacy towards procuring our pardon and acceptance.

To this reasoning an able writer has objected, that a self-righteous heart may make a righteousness of a passive, as well as of an active faith, and be as proud of his passivity, as the Pharisee was of his fasting twice in the week.—But, is there not a mighty difference, between fasting, in which you abstain from what is desirable, or suffer what is painful, from a free choice which you imagine virtuous; and the assenting to a truth, when that assent is constrained by evidence. If one is proud of the last, may he not with equal reason be proud, that he believes the sun is in the firmament, when his eyes are struck with the meridian splendor of that glorious luminary?

§ 3. Assent or persuasion is the only notion of faith, which, without straining, will apply to every Scripture, where any kind of faith is mentioned. Let the unbiassed reader consult his Bible, and judge for himself.

To leave no room for dispute, an inspired author has given us a description of the faith by which the just live. Heb. xi. 1. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." While worldly men see through a false medium, even things present and visible, and are blind to their true nature and consequences; faith renders invisible things visible, and absent things present. It gives so lively and realizing a representation of things hoped for, that they seem, as it were, actually existing before us. Our persuasion of them is as undoubted, as if we saw them with our bodily eyes, or had a mathematical demonstration of their reality. With Ste-

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phen, faith sees the heavens open, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God: nay, with Paul, it is caught up into the third heaven, and hears the praises of the redeemed. Its piercing eyes penetrate into that within the vail, whether the Forerunner has for us entered: and there behold the King in his beauty, and the land that is yet afar off. Nor is there in this any thing incredible. When we are firmly persuaded of any thing, in its own nature important and affecting, and appearing so to us, the mind is naturally led to contemplate it so steadily, that it impresses us, in some measure, as if it were already existing, present with us, and visible to our bodily eye. Faith is like those glasses, which give important and undoubted, though not full and distinct discoveries of objects, which our sight, without such assistance, could not perceive.

Dr. Owen, in his Catechism, has judiciously decided the question, I am now canvassing. Faith (says he) is in the understanding, in respect of its being and subsistence: in the will and heart, in respect of its effectual workings.

§ 4. It does not invalidate my reasoning, that it is said, Rom. x. 10. "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness." The heart is there opposed, not to the assent of the understanding, but to the profession of the lips; for it immediately follows, "And with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Nor are other places wanting, in the sacred oracles, where the heart means the intellectual powers. Thus Exod. xxviii. 3. "Thou shalt speak unto all the wise-hearted, whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom, that they may make Aaron's garments." Deut. xxix. 4. "Yet the Lord hath

“hath not given you an heart to perceive, and
 “eyes to see, and ears to hear unto this day.”
 1 Kings iv. 29. “And God gave Solomon wis-
 “dom and understanding exceeding much, and
 “largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on
 “the sea-shore.”

SECTION II.

§ 1. **SUPPOSING** it sufficiently proved, that
 the general idea of saving faith is assent
 or persuasion; two things are necessary to be ex-
 amined on this subject. First, What are the
 truths to which saving faith assents? Secondly,
 If there is any thing in the nature and foundation
 of the assent of saving faith, specifically different
 from the assent of unconverted sinners.

It is proper, in the first place, to investigate
 what are the truths to which saving faith neces-
 sarily assents. We are told, Rom. x. 17. “Faith
 “cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word
 “of God.” And 1 John v. 10. “He that be-
 “lieveth on the Son of God, hath the witness
 “in himself: he that believeth not God, hath
 “made him a liar, because he believeth not the
 “record that God gave of his Son.” Faith
 therefore is a persuasion of something testified in
 the word of God, which was true in itself, and
 of which such evidence was laid before us, that
 we had ground to believe it true, even while yet
 we did not discern that evidence, and actually
 believe it: nay, which would have remained
 true, though we had continued to reject the di-
 vine testimony. We may here apply the words
 of Paul, Rom. iii. 3. “What if some do not
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“believe? Shall their unbelief make the faith
“of God of none effect.” Faith therefore can-
“not be a persuasion, that Christ died for me in
particular, or that my sins are forgiven through
his blood. For this is no where testified in the
word of God. No unbeliever has sufficient evi-
dence of this laid before him. And, if he dies
in unbelief, it is a falshood. When the Scrip-
ture speaks of our being justified by faith, to sup-
pose this means, we obtain justification by a per-
suasion we are already justified, is ridiculously
absurd. I shall say no more of that hypothesis,
as several accurate writers have sufficiently ex-
posed it (a), and many good men who have es-
poused it, seem to entertain a sentiment very dif-
ferent from that, which their words, taken in
their obvious and natural sense, certainly convey.
Faith then is an assent to something revealed, and
that was true, previous to our believing it.

§ 2. Further. Faith is not a general implicit
assent to Christianity, or to what is contained in
the sacred oracles. Men may have that, without
understanding, what in Christianity is most impor-
tant. But saving faith, is a knowing what and
in whom we believe, 1 Tim. i. 12. There is a
seeing the Son, which, in order of nature, pre-
cedes believing on him, John vi. 40. God re-
veals by his Spirit, these mysteries of divine love,
which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither
hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive,
so that Christians know the things freely given

(a) See Lampii Dissertationes Amst. 1737, t. 1. Diss.
14. de fiducia. President Dickinson's Familiar Letters.
Letter 11. and Mr. Bellamy's Theron, Paulinus & At-
palio.

them of God, which natural men cannot know, because they are spiritually discerned, 1 Cor. ii. 9,—14. The spirit takes of the things of Christ, and shews them to men, John xvi. 14. and opens mens eyes, and turns them from darkness to light, that they may receive an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in Jesus, Acts xxvi. 18. The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the father, declares him, John i. 18. and manifests his name to the men given him out of the world, John xvii. 6. so that they all know God from the least to the greatest, Heb. viii. 11. And indeed, faith could not have that influence on the temper and conduct, which the Scripture ascribes to it, if it did not include some degree of knowledge and apprehension of what is believed. For truths, however interesting in their own nature, can no how engage the will and affections, unless they are understood. Our Lord charges the Jews, John v. 47. with not believing Moses's writings. They did not call in question their divine inspiration; but the most important truths contained in them, they rejected as false. He therefore believes in our Lord's sense of the word, who rightly understands the divine testimony, and receives and credits it in its genuine meaning, not mistaking, altering, or adding to the sense of it.

§ 3. No man thoroughly understands the whole of the Christian revelation, and therefore no man assents to it, except with a general implicit assent. I acknowledge, disbelief of any truth, known to be a part of divine revelation, is a damnable sin. But is, therefore, the headach and death of the son of the Shunamite, and Elisha's restoring him to life again, as essential an article of faith, as

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that Christ died for our offences, and rose again for our justification? Or is ignorance, that Giddalti was the son of Heman, or Noah the sister of Hogleh, as dangerous, as ignorance that Jesus is the Son of God? The Romanists therefore err, who make divine revelation, in general, the object of saving faith. Such a general implicit assent to divine revelation, without understanding what it contains, will not produce conviction of sin in the thoughtless and secure, will not command peace of conscience to the wounded in spirit, and will excite no man to holiness of heart and life. An implicit assent to the Bible, and an implicit assent to the Alcoran; a believing an unknown something, which I call Christianity, or an unknown something which I call Mahometanism, are nearly allied, and equally useless.

If it is absurd to suppose, that every thing in the Bible is fundamental, it is still more absurd to imagine, that nothing is so. A religion, in which nothing is necessary, must itself be needless. And therefore in the ignorance, or neglect, of such religion, there can be little harm.

What are the truths thus necessary to be believed, can be learned with certainty only from the sacred oracles. And here our enquiries are happily reduced to a narrow compass, as there is one radical comprehensive truth, assent to which is represented as saving faith, and which supposes, includes, or necessarily infers every other truth thus fundamental. That truth is expressed in a variety of language, in different passages of Scripture, and will be best learned by surveying some of them.

§ 4. I begin with Scriptures, in which this comprehensive fundamental article is termed *The Truth*, to intimate, that of all truths it is the

most necessary and important. John i. 17. "The law was given by Moses, but the grace and the truth came by Jesus Christ," i. e. All saving mercies are dispensed through the blood and merits of Christ: and he hath given a clear revelation of these counsels of divine wisdom for man's salvation, which, during the Old Testament dispensation, were hid under obscure prophecies and figures. *The truth* may particularly refer to what was asserted, ver. 14, 16. "The word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth. And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace."

John viii. 31, 32. "Then said Jesus to those Jews, which believed on him, if ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Here it is natural to suppose that Christ by *my word*, ver. 31. and the truth, ver. 32. intends *the truth*, he had been just then uttering: that he was in the beginning of all things, ver. 25; (b) and not of this world, ver. 23; and consequently prior to and distinct from every creature; and that he was sent by the Father to be the light

(b) There is considerable difficulty in our Lord's words. John viii. 25. *ἐγὼ ἀρχὴν ὅτι καὶ λαλῶ ὑμῖν*. There seem two ellipses in the first part of these words to be thus supplied, *κατὰ τὴν ἀρχὴν αὐτοῦ*, &c. And the passage may be thus rendered, "In the beginning I am, which is that which even now I declare (i. e. have declared) to you." This interpretation has been learnedly defended by Lamp, Dissertations, t. i. Diss. 12, ad locum John viii. 25.

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of the world, and to save men from their sins, by being lifted up on a cross; but that those who believed not this testimony of him should die in their sins, ver. 12, 18, 24, 26, 28, 29.

John xvii. 19. "And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified thro' the truth." Some of the truths mentioned in the context are: that the Father sent the Son into the world; that the Son glorified the Father on earth, and finished the work, which the Father gave him to do; that the Father hath given him power over all flesh, that he might give eternal life to as many as were given him; or in fewer words, that for the sake of those given him of the Father he sanctified himself, ver. 3, 4, 2, 19 first clause. Two verses before, Christ had termed that same doctrine the Father's truth. "Sanctify them thro' thy truth, thy word is truth." The truth, which reveals the decrees and will of the Father, in that scheme of grace for man's redemption, which could never have been known without revelation, and which appears every way so worthy the God and Father of our Lord Jesus, and so brightly displays his glory, that its excellency points out its author, and to which the Father hath born witness, both by the prophets, and a voice from heaven.

Eph. i. 13. "In whom ye also trusted after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation." Here the last expression sufficiently explains the first.

John ii. 4. "He that sayeth, I know him (viz. Jesus) and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." Here the truth means what was asserted, ver.

1, 2. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

1 John ii. 21. "I have not written unto you, because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth." We may learn, what is the truth from ver. 22. where the apostle tells us, the lie opposite to it. "Who is a liar, but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son." The lie is a denying the Messiahship or Sonship of Christ. The truth therefore is, that Jesus is the Christ, the son of the living God.

2 John 1, 2. "The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth, and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth; for the truth's sake which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever." Ver. 7. points out to what truth he refers. "For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh."

All these scriptures lead to one conclusion, that the only begotten of the Father was sent by him to this wretched world, to be the propitiation and advocate of sinners: and that a fullness of grace dwells in him, and power is given him over all flesh, that he might give eternal life to those given him of the Father. This doctrine is with peculiar propriety termed the truth. In it the prophecies of the Old Testament, and types of the law, have their true and full accomplishment.

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ment. There is a glory in it, which demonstrates its divine original, and that it is indeed the truth of God. By it Christianity is distinguished from all other religions. The belief of it constitutes men true Christians, and renews and sanctifies their hearts. It is the truth which glorifies God, and saves man. And here I can freely adopt the words of Mr. Glass's Testimony, c. v. Sect. 2. "It takes no more to
" make any man a subject of Christ's kingdom,
" but to be of this truth, and it requires no
" less. In this truth, all Christ's subjects are
" one, however otherwise differenced. They
" have different measures of light, whence dif-
" ferences of opinion and practice will be found
" among them, and they are liable to error in
" many cases, while they are in this world. But
" they are every one of this truth, tho' they
" may have different speculations about it, and
" controversies of words, while the truth itself
" reigns in all their hearts." Whether that ingenious writer, and those who stand connected with him in church fellowship, still adhere to these truly scriptural, and catholic principles, or whether they have since renounced them, is an historical question, which it is not my business, and indeed, which I have neither ability nor inclination to discuss.

§ 5. In a variety of scriptures, faith is described as a persuasion of the Messiahship and Sonship of Christ. Matth. xvi. 16, 17. "Peter
" answered and said, Thou art Christ the son of
" the living God. And Jesus answered and said
" unto him, Blessed art thou Simon Barjonah ;
" for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto
" thee, but my Father which is in heaven."

John vi. 69. "And we believe, and are sure,
 " that thou art that Christ, the son of the liv-
 " ing God." John xi. 27. "I believe that
 " thou art the Christ the Son of God,
 " which should come into the world." John
 xx. 31. "But these are written, that ye might
 " believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of
 " God, and that believing, ye might have life
 " through his name." Acts viii. 37. "And
 " Philip said, if thou believest with all thine
 " heart, thou mayest. And he answered and
 " said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of
 " God." 1 John v. 1. "Whosoever believeth
 " that Jesus is the Christ is born of God."
 Ib. ver. 5. "Who is he that overcometh the
 " world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the
 " Son of God." Mr. Lock, in his Reasonableness
 of Christianity, has largely and unanswerably
 proved, that this proposition, *Jesus is the*
Christ, the Son of the living God, was the only one,
 the belief whereof was necessary to constitute
 a Christian, and therefore was the grand doc-
 trine preached by the apostles to infidels, and
 in support of which both Christ and his apostles
 wrought their miracles. But as that great phi-
 losopher observes, *Second Vindication of the Reason-*
ableness of Christianity, folio edition, p. 583. "A
 " man cannot possibly give his assent to any af-
 " firmation or negation, unless he understands the
 " terms, as they are joined in that proposition,
 " and has a conception of the thing affirmed or
 " denied, and also of the thing concerning
 " which it is affirmed or denied, as they are put
 " together." To believe therefore, that Jesus
 is the Christ the Son of the living God, cannot
 avail us, if by these terms we understand no-
 thing,

thing, or something different from what is signified by them in the sacred oracles.

§ 6. The belief that Jesus is the Christ, which constitutes one a Christian, implies something more than belief that Jesus is a divine teacher. Nicodemus believed that Jesus was a teacher sent from God. And yet he was not born again, or a true Christian, for our Lord particularly applies to him, what he had before asserted in general, as to the necessity of regeneration. John iii. 7. "Marvel not, that I said unto thee, ye must be born again."

The meaning of the name Christ or anointed, may be learned from these places of the Old Testament, in which it is given to the promised Saviour. Such as 1 Sam. ii. 10. "The Lord shall judge the ends of the earth, and he shall give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed." Ps. ii. 2, 6, 12. "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against his anointed. Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little: blessed are all they that put their trust in him." Ps. xlv. 7. "Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God thy God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." Ps. lxxxiv. 9. "Behold O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed." Ps. cxxxii. 10. "For thy servant David's sake, turn not away the face of thine anointed." Ib. ver. 17, 18. "There will I make the horn of David to bud: I have ordained a lamp for

" mine anointed. His enemies will I cloath
 " with shame: but upon himself shall his
 " crown flourish." *Is. lxi. 1—3.* " The spirit
 " of the Lord God is upon me, because the
 " LORD hath anointed me to preach good
 " tidings to the meek, he hath sent me to bind
 " up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to
 " the captives, and the opening of the prison
 " to them that are bound: To proclaim the
 " acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of
 " vengeance of our God, to comfort all that
 " mourn: To appoint unto them that mourn
 " in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes,
 " the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of
 " praise for the spirit of heaviness, that they
 " might be called trees of righteousness, the
 " planting of the LORD, that he might be
 " glorified." *Dan. ix. 24 — 26.* " Seventy
 " weeks are determined upon thy people, and
 " upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression,
 " and to make an end of sins, and to make
 " reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in
 " everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the
 " vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most
 " holy. Know therefore and understand, that
 " from the going forth of the commandment
 " to restore and to build Jerusalem, unto the Mes-
 " siah the prince, shall be seven weeks, and
 " threescore and two weeks the street shall be
 " built again, and the wall even in troublous
 " times. And after threescore and two weeks
 " shall Messiah be cut off, but not for him-
 " self." From these places it is evident, that
 the Son of God, as the glorious antitype of
 those anointed under the Old Testament, should
 be anointed with the Holy Ghost, publish salva-
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tion as a prophet, purchase it as a priest, and bestow it as a king : that God's looking on the face of his anointed, who made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in an everlasting righteousness, is man's full and only encouragement to hope for every blessing : that the enemies of this anointed one shall be cloathed with shame, and that these are blessed who put their trust in him. These, and many important particulars of the same nature, might be still farther illustrated and confirmed from Ps. xxii. and cx. II. xi, xlix, liii. Zach. iii. 8, 9 ; vi. 12. 13 ; ix. 9—12 ; xiii. 7. and a variety of other scriptures, which it would too much swell these sheets to transcribe.

§ 7. Let us next enquire, in what sense, we must believe, that Jesus is the Son of God. For Christ and Son of God, do not mean precisely the same thing : Else, Matth. xvi. 16 ; xxvi. 63. John xi. 27 ; xx. 31. 2 Cor. i. 19. 1 John i. 3, 7. where both these titles are in the same sentence ascribed to Jesus, must needs appear vain and useless repetitions, unworthy of the wisdom of the Holy Ghost. Besides, we are told, Acts ix. 20. that Paul “ preached Christ “ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.” Surely this cannot mean, he preached that Christ was Christ. So great a master of reasoning, not to say an inspired Apostle, was incapable of solemnly asserting and proving a merely identical proposition. Indeed if Christ had been used as a proper name in the apostolical times, as it is in modern writings, my reasoning would not be conclusive. But in fact, Jesus, the name given our Lord at his circumcision, was the only name by which unbelievers then spoke of him. What

Paul preached to the Jews, was therefore this, that the promised Messiah is no less a person than the Son of God. The prophets, had ascribed both titles to the Redeemer. And the high priest was probably sensible of this, when he adjured Jesus by the living God, to tell whether he was the Christ the Son of God. Matth. xxvi. 63. Yet it was more obscure, that the promised Redeemer was the Son of God, in that full emphasis of the title, which includes his divine nature, than that God was to anoint him in a peculiar manner with the Holy Ghost. The charge of blasphemy against Jesus, was not founded on his claiming the character of Messiah, but on his styling himself the Son of God. See John v. 18; x. 33. Had it not been for this last claim, it is probable, that the Jews with less difficulty would have admitted the first. They easily perceived, that if the Messiah was indeed God, he was infinitely superior to Moses, and therefore had power to abolish Moses's law, and to erect a spiritual and heavenly kingdom in its room. That consequence they detested, and thus were led to reject the principle from which it flowed. With good reason therefore, did Jesus and his apostles insist upon it, as a term of discipleship, that Jesus should be acknowledged not only as the Christ, but as the Son of God. These very Jews, who believed that Jesus was the prophet that should come into the world, and were designed to take him by force, and make him a king, yet could not bear the assertion that he came from heaven. And it was in distinction from those who stumbled at that doctrine, that Peter professed in the name of the twelve apostles, "We believe and are sure,

“ sure, that thou art that Christ, the Son of the
 “ living God. See John vi. 14, 15, 41, 42;
 66—69.

We read, Matth. xiv. 33. “ Then they that
 “ were in the ship, came and worshipped him;
 (i. e. Jesus) saying, of a truth, thou art the
 “ Son of God.” And John ix. 35—38. “ Je-
 sus heard that they had cast him (*viz.* the blind
 “ man) out; and when he had found him, he
 “ said unto him, dost thou believe on the Son of
 “ God? He answered and said, who is he, Lord,
 “ that I might believe on him? And Jesus said
 “ unto him, thou hast both seen him, and it is he
 “ that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I
 “ believe, and he worshipped him.” Here we
 see that those in the ship with Jesus, and the
 blind man, looked upon Jesus as the Son of
 God, and entitled in that capacity to divine ado-
 ration. If it was without ground they had ima-
 gined, that the title *Son of God* imported divi-
 nity; or if they had worshipped Jesus without
 regarding him as God, he would have accosted
 them with some such question, as he put to the
 young man, Matth. xix. 16, 17. “ Why cal-
 “ lest thou me good? There is none good, but
 “ one, that is God.” I acknowledge the word
 προσκυρεν sometimes means only such civil ho-
 mage as was paid to the eastern monarchs. But
 not to observe, that the Jews in that age, had
 no custom of expressing their honouring princes
 by any such rite; it is plain, there was nothing
 in our Lord’s outward appearance royal and ma-
 jestic, and therefore the homage paid him, was
 evidently paid him as Son of God. And that
 such adoration was not to be given to a fellow
 creature, is plain from Rev. xxii. 8, 9. “ And
 “ I

“ I John saw these things and heard them. And
 “ when I had heard and seen, I fell down to
 “ worship, before the feet of the angel, which
 “ shewed me these things. Then saith he unto
 “ me, see thou do it not, for I am thy fellow-
 “ servant, and of thy brethren the prophets,
 “ and of them which keep the sayings of this
 “ book : worship God.”

If the title *Son of God* did not in the apprehension of the Jews import divinity, Jesus, when he thus addressed them, John x. 36. “ Say ye of
 “ him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and
 “ sent into the world, thou blasphemest : be-
 “ cause I said, I am the Son of God ?” must be supposed to have accused them of saying what they had not said, and of founding the charge of blasphemy where they had not founded it. And if this apprehension of the Jews was a wrong one, and the title *Son of God* imported something created, hardly can it be thought, our Lord would have said nothing to remove that stumbling-block out of their way.

We must therefore believe, that the Messiah is the Son of God in the fullest and most emphatical sense of the word. On this account the article is added, John vi. 69. *ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ*, and Jesus is termed, John iii. 16. “ God’s only begotten Son,” i. e. the Son of God in a sense incommunicable to any creature, and which has not, nay, cannot have any thing parallel to it in universal nature. A parent of many children divides among them his honours and possessions, and does not give all to any one. But to an only begotten son, a parent gives all that he has to give without exception. The name, therefore, Only begotten Son of God, intimates, that the
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glory of the Son is as great as that of the Father, and that all things whatsoever the Father hath, are his. Possibly to some it may appear a speculative point of small importance, that he who came in the name of the Lord to save us, was indeed the equal and fellow of the Almighty. But the Scripture lays upon this the greatest stress, as an evidence that Jesus is able to save to the uttermost, and an encouragement to rely on him for salvation. And saving faith accordingly views him as a person of infinite dignity, and therefore able to bear the weight of the Father's anger, to quench the fire of vindictive justice; to begin, carry on, and complete the recovery of defiled and diseased souls; and to make his people conquerors, and more than conquerors, of all their enemies. Let me appeal to a few Scripture prophecies, Isa. xii. 2, 3. "Behold, God is my
"salvation: I will trust and not be afraid; for
"the LORD Jehovah is my strength and my
"song, he also is become my salvation. There-
"fore with joy shall ye draw water out of the
"wells of salvation." Isa. xxvi. 4. "Trust
"ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD Je-
"hovah is everlasting strength." Isa. xlv. 22,
24. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends
"of the earth: for I am God, and there is none
"else. Surely, shall one say, in the LORD have
"I righteousness and strength." Zech. xii. 1,
"10. "Thus saith the LORD which stretcheth
"forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation
"of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man
"within him, I will pour upon the house of
"David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem,
"the spirit of grace and of supplication, and
"they shall look upon me whom they have pier-
"ced."

"ced." So that what was given to Israel after
 the flesh, as a security of their deliverance from
 Babylon, may well be applied to the redemption
 from sin and satan thereby typified. Jer. l. 34.
 "Their Redsemer is strong, the Lord of hosts
 "is his name, he shall thoroughly plead their
 "cause." The New Testament throws still a
 clearer light on this interesting subject. Rom. v.
 10. "For if, when we were enemies, we were
 "reconciled to God by the death of his Son:
 "much more being reconciled we shall be saved
 "by his life." Heb. i. 2, 3. "God hath in
 "these last days spoken unto us by his Son,
 "whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by
 "whom also he made the worlds: Who being
 "the brightness of his glory, and the express
 "image of his person, and upholding all things
 "by the word of his power, when he had by
 "himself purged our sins, sat down on the right-
 "hand of the Majesty on high." Heb. iv. 14,
 16. "Seeing then, that we have a great High
 "Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus
 "the Son of God, Let us therefore come boldly
 "unto the throne of grace, &c." Heb. vii. 28.
 "For the law maketh *men* high priests which
 "have infirmity; but the word of the oath,
 "which was since the law, maketh *the Son*,
 "who is consecrated for evermore." Heb. ix.
 14. "How much more shall the blood of
 "Christ, who, through the eternal spirit, offered
 "himself without spot unto God, purge your
 "conscience from dead works." 1 John i. 7.
 "And the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us
 "from all sin." We are taught, Ephes. iv. 13.
 that the members of Christ's mystical body, "all
 "come in the unity of the faith, and of the know-

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ledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." This knowledge of Jesus as Son of God, and nothing less than this, lays the foundation for a trust in him absolutely unlimited. Without it we must have apprehensions infinitely unsuitable, of the love and condescension of the Son in coming to save us, of the love of the Father in sending his Son, and of the assurance he has given by bestowing this chief and unspeakable gift, that with him he will freely give us all things. See John iii. 16. 1 John iv. 9, 10. Rev. i. 5, 6. Rom. viii. 32. At the same time, the necessity of shedding blood so infinitely precious for man's redemption, gives us the highest possible proof of the infinite evil of sin, of the spotless purity and tremendous justice of God, and thus of the need we have to pass the time of our sojourning here in fear. See 1 Pet. i. 17—19.

§ 8. Faith is described, Isa. liii. 1. as a believing the gospel report; and of that report we have a comprehensive abstract, 1 John iv. 14. "We have seen and do testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." This nearly co-incides with the former description. The Father's sending the Son is much the same with his anointing him; and the Son's being Saviour of the world, is the same with his executing the offices to which he was anointed for their salvation. Let us however consider the precise immediate meaning of the Father sending the Son to be the Saviour of the world. The words *σωτηρ* and *σωτηρις* are used in the New Testament and in the Septuagint, not only for deliverance out of evil, but for preservation from it by continual protection. See Psal. xxxvi. 7. Gen. xix.

xix. 19, 22. 1 Sam. xix. 12. Matth. xxiv. 22. John xi. 12. Acts xxvii. 20, 21. Matth. viii. 25. And this perhaps is the sense of the word, 1 Tim. iv. 14. where God is termed the Saviour, i. e. Preserver of all men, especially of them that believe. The name Σωτηρ, was often given by the Greeks to Princes, to signify that they had been blessings and benefactors to their subjects. And the LXX. use it instead of the word ὤψ, which imports not only the removal of evil, but the restoring of happiness, so that it shall not be lost any more. See Deut. xxxiii. 29. Isa. xlv. 17. The name Joshuah was given by divine direction, not to the deliverer of Israel out of Egypt, but to him who put them in possession of the land of Canaan. Saving, Luke xviii. 42. means recovering sight. And, Acts iv. 9. σωσας is rendered in our English version made whole. It is natural therefore to understand salvation in the largest sense, in passages which prophecy of the Messias as a Saviour, *v. g.* Gen. xlix. 18. Isa. xii. 2. lii. 9, 10. Jer. xxiii. 5, 6. And, in fact, the salvation purchased and applied by Christ includes, (1.) Deliverance from the guilt and punishment of sin, and restoration to the favour of God. See 1 Thess. i. 10. Ephes. i. 7. The Greeks termed a sentence of absolution σαζωσς, and saving is opposed to condemning, John iii. 17. Mark xvi. 16. (2.) Deliverance even in this life from the power and dominion of sin, and a begun conformity to God's image, Matth. i. 21. Tit. ii. 14. (3.) A deliverance at last from all the remains of sin and sorrow, and the possession of fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore, 1 John v. 10, 11. Hence faith is described, Heb. xi. as a lively realizing persuasion of the glories of an unseen world, leading men from desire of that

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that better country and respect to the recompence of reward, to renounce the pleasures of sin, and to suffer affliction with the people of God. And they who have the spirit of faith are represented, 2 Cor. iv. 13, 18. as looking at the things which are unseen and eternal. It must not be forgot, that the gospel-testimony exhibits Christ as sent by the Father, and faith respects him as the Father's ordinance for man's salvation. See John v. 24. vi. 29. xii. 44. xvi. 27. xvii. 8. Rom. iii. 23. —25. His resurrection from the dead, was not only an attestation of his divine mission, but a declaration that he had done and suffered all that was necessary for man's salvation. And, therefore, saving faith is described, Rom. x. 9. as a believing in the heart, that God raised the Lord Jesus from the dead. And Peter addresses the Christians to whom he wrote, 1 ep. i. 21. as by Christ believing in God that raised him up from the dead and gave him glory, that their faith and hope might be in God.

§ 9. Saving faith is represented as a believing on Christ's name, John i. 12. iii. 18. Acts x. 43. 1 John v. 13. What is termed, Matth. xii. 21. trusting in Christ's name is termed, Isa. xlii. 4. waiting for his law. By both expressions we are to understand, the law that was to go forth out of Zion, Isa. ii. 3. even the law of faith, Rom. iii. 27. or, in plainer words, the doctrine of the gospel, by which Christ manifests himself to men. This is Christ's name, which Paul was to bear before the Gentiles, and for the sake of which he was to suffer great things, Acts ix. 15, 16. And we are told, Acts viii. 12. that the Samaritans believed Philip, preaching the things concerning the name of Jesus Christ. The name

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of Christ chiefly denotes, (1.) The doctrine of justification through his name or merits, 1 John ii. 12. 60 I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake. Jer. xxiii. 6. 61 This is the name, whereby he shall be called, Jehovah our righteousness. i. e. He shall be acknowledged as the self-existent God, and as having wrought out that righteousness, through which alone any of mankind are justified. The confessing these truths is made a necessary mark of the true church. Jer. xxxiii. 16. 62 This is the name wherewith he shall be called, Jehovah our righteousness. From a conviction of this we are to pray in Christ's name, John xiv. 13. xv. 16. xvi. 23. i. e. to plead upon his obedience and sufferings for every needful blessing. Agreeably to the prophecy, Joel ii. 32. 63 Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered; where calling on the name of the Lord means the same thing as making mention of his righteousness, even of his only, Psal. lxxi. 16. (2.) The name of Christ may intend also, the doctrine of the glory to which he is advanced, as Mediator, in order to apply the purchased redemption. God the Father has given him a name above every name, Phil. ii. 10. In consequence of his obedience and sufferings, as a minister of the true sanctuary, he intercedes for us, as a Prophet teaches, and as a King rules us. Through this name we are saved, Acts iv. 12. i. e. by the power with which the Mediator is vested, the disorders are rectified, and the diseases cured, which sin had introduced into our natures. Through this name believers shall have life, John xx. 31. and in this name men shall be

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be blessed, Psal. lxxii. 17. i. e. by the power of the Redeemer, grace shall be conferred upon them here, and glory hereafter: power being given him over all flesh, that he might give eternal life to as many as were given him of the Father.

§ 10. Many Scriptures, which assert the necessity of faith, would, if duly considered, acquaint us what is its nature and object.

It is said, John iii. 16. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." If we attentively view this verse, and the rest of our Lord's discourse with Nicodemus, it will appear, that we must believe on Christ, considered as God's only begotten Son, who, as such, was in heaven, even when he had come down from it; and yet as also the Son of man: as lifted up on a cross for the cure of our spiritual maladies: and as the gift of the Father's love to a wretched perishing world, the Father having constituted him Redeemer in the council of peace, 2 Tim. ii. 9. Acts ii. 23. sent him into the world in the fulness of time, to assume man's nature, and obey and suffer for man, Isa. ix. 6. Jo. vi. 32. and having actually delivered him up to death as an atonement for our sins, Rom. viii. 32.

It is said, John iii. 36. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." The remainder of John's sermon shews, that we must believe on Jesus as the Bridegroom of the church; as one that comes from heaven and is above all; as one whom God hath sent, who speaketh the words of God, and to whom God giveth not the Spirit by measure; and as the Son of God,

whom

whom the Father loves, and into whose hands he hath given all things.

John vi. 47. "He that believeth on me, hath everlasting life;" i. e. as appears from the context, he that believeth on me as the bread of God, which came down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world; he that believeth me not only willing to save all that come to me, but so able that none such shall fail of complete salvation.

Acts xiii. 38. "By him all that believe are justified." Here, as the connection shews, believing means a persuasion, that through the blood and merits of Christ, the chief of sinners may be pardoned and accepted.

Acts xxvi. 18. "Sanctified by faith that is in me;" i. e. by a persuasion of the truth chiefly preached by the apostles, of which we have a comprehensive abstract, ver. 23. "That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people and to the Gentiles."

Rom. iii. 21—26. faith is evidently represented as a believing, that through Christ's blood and righteousness God may be just, in justifying men who have sinned, and come short of his glory. And that a persuasion of Christ's death, as an atonement for sin, is essential to saving faith, is strongly intimated, John i. 29. Gal. ii. 20.

§ 11. One thing further I would observe, that believing in Christ, necessarily supposes, a believing that mankind by their rebellions against God, had merited the severest effects of his displeasure; were unable to satisfy divine justice for their offences, or to cure their natural depravity;

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vity; and were unworthy of the divine pity and help; so that their salvation is wholly to be ascribed, to the free mercy of God, and to the blood and obedience of Jesus. God's sending his Son to be the Saviour of the world, demonstrates, that the world was in a perishing condition, and without this amazing interposition must have actually perished. And this again demonstrates the infinite evil of sin, and the eternal and unalterable obligations men are under to love and serve God. To one insensible, that the law of God is holy, just, and good, and that his violations of that law deserve the most dreadful punishment, the tidings of a Saviour will appear an insult, not a favour. And the sufferings of that Saviour, in the room of sinners, will lead such a one, instead of admiring the tremendous justice and spotless purity of God, to suspect him of cruelty, whose tender mercies are over all his other works. Mr. Glas justly observes, *Testimony*, c. 5. § 3. That without a work of the law upon their consciences, men will slight the glad tidings of salvation.

§ 12. But I pretend not to collect a list of the truths, which it is evident from Scripture, saving faith either directly assents to, or necessarily supposes. It is for wise reasons, no such list is contained in the sacred oracles. It might have proved a fatal temptation to many; to rest content, with some general belief of these first principles of the oracles of God, instead of growing in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. For the same reason, the Bible tells us not, though many divines have attempted to tell us, how near we may approach the borders of wickedness without committing it, or how far we may be overcome by sin and satan, and

and yet retain a principle of grace. The silence of the Scripture, is a spur to diligence and advancement in religion, and a warning to pass the time of our sojourning here in fear.

SECTION III.

§ I. BUT are there not names given to faith, in various passages of Scripture, that import choice, affection, and other operations of the will?—This has been taken for granted. How far upon sufficient grounds, I am now to enquire.

Faith is represented as hearing Christ, or the words or voice of Christ, Deut. xviii. 15. Psal. xviii. 45. Prov. i. 33. Isa. xlix. 1. lv. 3. John v. 24. 25. Without doubt every believer hears the voice of Christ calling him to the exercise of devout affections, and a correspondent practice. But that voice of the supreme Wisdom (*c*), the heavenly Bridegroom (*d*), the good Shepherd (*e*), which was to call nations hitherto ignorant of true religion (*f*), yea, to quicken the dead and call the things that are not, as tho' they were (*g*), is no other than the glad tidings that the Father hath sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. This is the joy and gladness which David prays he might be made to hear, Psal. li. 8. Faith hears, *i. e.* credits these declarations of God's mercy through Christ in the written word, and in the preached gospel. Clemens Alexandrinus

(*c*) Prov. i. 20. viii. 1. 4. (*d*) Cant. ii. 8.
(*e*) John x. 3. 16. (*f*) Isa. lv. 5. (*g*) Rom. 11. 17.

justly

justly observes, *Strom.* l. 5. c. 1. that faith is the ear of the soul, and that Homer uses hearing for perceiving. *Odyss.* ζ. ver. 186.

§ 2. Receiving Christ, where it is put for faith, is nothing else than receiving the gospel-testimony concerning Christ. In almost all languages, the metaphor of receiving, is often applied to hearing, learning, believing. Thus *Hesychius de viris doctrina claris*, p. 13. *ὡς ἰστοι παραλαβάντες ἐξ ἐδὲ ζαντο.* *Virgil. Æneid.* II. 65. *Accipe nunc Danaum insidias.* *Sulpicius Severus*, *Dial.* I. pag. 428. “A beato viro Joanne verbum salutis accepit.” The same phraseology, is used both in the Old and New Testament, *Prov.* i. 3. ii. 1. iv. 10. *Matth.* xi. 14. *Acts* xvii. 11. *1 Cor.* xi. 23. xv. 1, 3. *Gal.* i. 9. *Philp.* iv. 9. And faith is expressly described as a receiving God’s testimony concerning his Son, *John* iii. 32, 33. *1 John* v. 9. As a gladly receiving Peter’s words, *Acts* ii. 41. And as receiving the word of God, *Acts* xi. 1.

Receiving Christ therefore, *John* i. 11, 12. is a receiving him as the light of the world, ver. 4—9. which he was chiefly by his death and sufferings, as by these he witnessed to and manifested the truth, in a manner peculiar to himself, as the Son of God and Saviour of men.

John v. 43. “I am come in my Father’s name, and ye receive me not.” The meaning is, ye do not believe and acknowledge my divine commission to save sinners. For our Lord proceeds to shew, ver. 44—47. why they believed not his words, which would not have been to his purpose, if believing his words and receiving him had not meant one and the same thing.

Our Lord himself puts it beyond question, that receiving him, means receiving or believing the doctrine of the apostles, John xiii. 20. Matth. x. 40. "He that receiveth you, receiveth me, and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me," i. e. He that acknowledgeth you as my embassadors, 1 Cor. iv. 1. and regards your message as the word of the living God, 1 Thess. ii. 13. receiveth me, and the Father that sent me. Hence unbelievers are represented as putting from them the word of God, Acts xiii. 46. And rejecting Christ is explained, John xii. 48. as a not receiving his words. Consequently to accept Christ, is to receive these words.

I acknowledge the generality of Calvinists, have considered the consent of the will as included in receiving Christ. Nor will I peremptorily deny, that in some Scriptures, receiving Christ may signify, the heart chusing, and the affections embracing and cleaving to Christ as our Prophet, Priest, and King; and the whole soul consenting to, approving of, and delighting in the Saviour, and in the gospel scheme of salvation through him. But then, in these Scriptures, it denotes something different from faith, though I readily allow intimately connected with, inseparably attending, or necessarily flowing from faith, and therefore essential to the Christian character. Every believer is acquainted with these actings of soul. They are not faith. Yet that is no reason for treating them ludicrously. There may be ground for the censure passed by the learned Mr. Riccaltown, *Sober Enquiry*, c. 5. "Some seem to speak, as if Christ was like a material gift, which cannot be given, unless it change
Masters,

“ Masters, nor received without a formal taking
 “ it into one’s custody and possession, as part of
 “ his goods and utensils; an absurdity so obvi-
 “ ous, that one would think to mention it were
 “ to confute it.” Yet I am persuaded, that ve-
 nerable divine will agree with me, that the im-
 proper stile in which a good thing has been some-
 times represented, and the wrong name that has
 been given it, will not vindicate those, whether
 Calvinists or Arminians, who have lately dressed
 it in a fool’s coat. Even wise and good men, by
 immoderate care to guard against one extreme,
 are often apt to fall into another no less pernicious.

§ 3. There is still less difficulty in explaining
 these Scriptures, in which faith seems to be re-
 presented by eating or drinking, and particularly
 by eating Christ’s flesh and drinking his blood.

Any thing that either improves or comforts the
 mind, is termed its food. Cicero says of *Deme-
 trius Phalereus*, l. 5. de fin. “ *Animi cultus erat*
 “ *ei quasi cibus.*” Wickedness is represented as
 the food of the ungodly, Job xx. 14. And the
 graces of saints and the conversion of the wicked
 is represented as our Saviour’s food, Cant. iv. 16.
 v. 1. Rev. iii. 20. John iv. 32, 34. because he
 rejoices in these. That which is not bread, Isa.
 lv. 2. is that which can afford the soul no real
 improvement, no solid and substantial pleasure.

But with peculiar propriety, truth is repre-
 sented as meat and drink to the soul, and know-
 ing, believing, and considering the truth, as eat-
 ing and drinking. Thus *Petronius Arbiter Satyric.*
 c. 5.

“ *Mæoniumque bibat foelici pectore fontem,*
 “ *Mox a Socratico plenus.*” —

And it was common among the Jews, instead of saying, Master, we come to be thy scholars, to say, Master, we come to drink waters from thy well (*b*). Hence, waters are often a symbol of the gospel revelation, *e. g.* Psal. xlvi. 4. Isa. xlv. 3. Zech. xiv. 8. Joel iii. 18. Ezek. xlvii. 1. and eating and drinking often denote, faith joyfully assenting to and contemplating the word of grace. See Prov. ix. 5. Cant. v. 1. Isa. lv. 1. lxv. 13. Jer. xv. 16. John vi. 50. vii. 37. Rev. xxii. 17. The glad tidings of salvation published to all nations are the accomplishment of that promise, Isa. xxv. 6. "And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined." When these glad tidings are understood and believed, the meek do eat and are satisfied, Psal. xxii. 27. they taste and see that the Lord is good, Psal. xxxiv. 9. Christ's fruit is sweet to their taste, Cant. ii. 3. yea, with joy they draw water out of these wells of salvation, Isa. xii. 3. and this affords an easy interpretation of what our Lord says, John vi. 54, 55. "Who so eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed." It is the doctrine of Christ crucified, not the material flesh and blood of Christ, which is here asserted to be the food of the soul. Hence, our Lord adds, ver. 63. "It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth

(*b*) See Schottgenii horæ Hebraicæ in John iv. 14. and Universal History, 8vo. edit. vol. III. 227.

"nothing:

“ nothing: the words that I speak unto you, “ they are spirit, and they are life.” The scope of that discourse, as is intimated, ver. 29. was to recommend faith; and through the whole of it believing and eating are synonymous expressions, and have the same things ascribed to them. Thus what is asserted of believing, ver. 40. is asserted in almost the same words of eating Christ’s flesh and drinking his blood, ver. 54.

In consequence of this spiritual eating and drinking, Christ the bread of life, i. e. the doctrine of the person, offices and sufferings of Christ, abides John vi. 56; xv. 4. 7. lives Gal. ii. 20. dwells Eph. iii. 17. (i) in believers; and is in them

(i) If this interpretation of Christ’s abiding, living, and dwelling in the soul, appears ill grounded to any, let them attend to what follows. Christ abiding in us, and his words abiding in us, are used as synonymous expressions. John xv. 5, 7. Parallel to these are the expressions 1 John ii. 24, 27. of that abiding in Christians which they had heard from the beginning; and of that anointing which teacheth them all things abiding in them. The essential presence of Christ as God is every where. And as man, the heavens must receive him till the time of the restitution of all things. But he is present with his people in a gracious manner, by the words of his gospel, accompanied by the influence of his spirit. These are the seed of the new birth, by which Christ is formed in men: 1 Pet. i. 23. 1 John iii. 9. And where these are habitually considered and believed, they are also the grand means of advancing real Christians in conformity to God’s image. 2 Tim. iii. 17. Hence we are often reminded, how important it is to continue in Christ’s words, John viii. 31. to abide in the doctrine of Christ, 2 John 9. and to continue in the things we have learned. 1 Tim. iii. 15. Christ crucified is not only *the way*, the alone medium of access to God, and acceptance with him, *the truth* firmly believed by every Christian, but *the life*, the doctrine which imparts spiritual strength and vigour to the soul.

them the hope of glory, Col. i. 27. and strength of their life. Ps. xxxvii. 1. Nay, divine truth thus received, becomes in the soul a well of living water, springing up into eternal life, John iv. 14. or as it is expressed John vii. 38. rivers of living water. So that believers, especially public teachers, are as so many fountains or rivers, to convey to others these salutary streams, Ps. lxxxvii. 7. Prov. x. 11; xviii. 4. Is. xxxv. 7. 2 Pet. ii. 17. Rev. viii. 10. Only observe, that it is not they that drink; their example, eloquence, or christian experience, but *the water that is in them*, that is, the truths of the gospel, first believed by themselves, and then imparted to their hearers, which become to these hearers, spiritual drink, or the means of nourishing them up in faith, holiness and comfort.

§ 4. Coming to Christ, of which we read Is. xlv. 24; lv. 1. 3. John vi. 35, 37, 44, 45; vii. 37; xiv. 6; v. 40. is the immediate fruit of faith, rather than faith itself. It is the seeking all spiritual and heavenly blessings only in the way of union and communion with Christ, from

John xii. 49, 50. "The Father which sent me gave me a commandment, and I know that his commandment is life everlasting." The doctrine of Christ not only brings to light life and immortality, and the way that leads to them, but is the means in the hand of the spirit, to begin, preserve and strengthen that spiritual life, which shall at last be compleated in a life of glory. With the utmost justice therefore, did Peter say to our Lord, John vi. 68. "Thou hast the words of eternal life." And Christ himself addressing the Father, John xvii. 3. says, "This is life eternal to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." Job speaks, xix. 23. of the root of the word being found in him, and John i. ep. iii. 9. describes Christians as having God's seed, i. e. word remaining in them.

a persuasion, that in this way and no other they may be obtained. It is not improbable, that the expression alludes to the Israelites coming to the tabernacle or temple, where the Son of God in a typical manner manifested his glory. See Ps. xcv. 2; c. 2. If. xxvii. 13.

In like manner drawing near to God, coming to the throne of grace, or coming to God thro' Christ, are not descriptions of faith, but of the believer's application to God thro' the Redeemer for every blessing. Otherwise the exhortations to come to the throne of grace *boldly*, i. e. with the confidence of faith, Heb. iv. 16. and to draw near in *full assurance of faith*, Heb. x. 22. would be superfluous.

To this it has been ingeniously objected, "Our Lord said, ye will not come to me, that ye might have life. If a bare belief that he was the Messias entituled to eternal life, then one who believes this has a title to eternal life before he came to him, and if so, he has no need to come to him that he might have life. Our Saviour directed his disciples to ask all things of the Father in his name. He also taught them every day to pray forgive us our debts. Query, How can we go to God in the name of Christ for the pardon of daily transgressions, if in this way pardon is not to be obtained. If pardon is had by a bare belief of the bare truth, we are not in the belief of the truth to ask for pardon in the name of Christ, because we are pardoned already." (j).

(j) Bellamy's Glory of the Gospel, p. 75.

If it is indeed absurd, to pray or use means, for that, of which we have a promise, or to which we are already entituled, the above reasoning is unanswerable. But this, the objector has too much acquaintance with the Bible to assert. God had promised to David, 2 Sam. vii. 16. that his house and kingdom should be established for ever. And yet no sooner did Nathan intimate to David that promise, than we find him praying, as ver. 25. "And now, O LORD God, the word that thou hast spoken concerning thy servant, and concerning his house, establish it for ever, and do as thou has said." Paul was assured by an angel of God, that there should be no loss of any man's life that sailed in the ship with him. Acts xxvii. 21—25. And yet when the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship, Paul tells the Centurion, except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved, ver. 30, 31. The application of these remarks is obvious. Ungodly sinners, upon believing in Jesus, are entituled thro' his righteousness, to the pardon of sin, to the influences of the spirit, and to eternal glory; nay, the final possession of these blessings is ensured to them by the promise of God. Yet this does not hinder, their being put in actual possession of them gradually, and in the use of the prayer of faith, and other means.

SECTION IV.

§ 1. **B**UT does the faith of God's elect differ from that of others, only in the thing assented to?—By no means. The nature and foundation of the assent in him who has saving faith,

faith, is specifically different from the nature and foundation of the assent in self-deceivers.

Self-deceivers may have orthodox sentiments of religion. They may understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and yet want charity, 1 Cor. xiii. 2. And what they thus understand, they may also believe, being convinced by miracles and other external evidences, that these mysteries are indeed a divine revelation. Many believed in Christ's name, when they saw the miracles which he did, to whom Jesus would not commit himself, because he knew all men. John ii. 23, 24.

Shall we then say, that saving faith is not founded upon evidence, and that it assents to truth it knows not why?—That would contradict the apostle's assertion, Heb. xi. 1. that faith is the evidence *ελεγχος* of things not seen, i. e. furnishes the mind with convincing evidence of objects invisible to the bodily eye: and Christ's promise, that the spirit shall convince (*ελεγξει*) the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. John xvi. 8. The word signifies to convince by way of demonstration, or so to manifest the evidence of a truth, that it shall appear unreasonable to entertain the least doubt of it. *Ελεγχος δε εστιν*, says Aristotle, *Rhet. ad Alex. c. 14. ο μιν μη δυνατος αλλως εχειν, αλλ' οτως ως ημεις λεγομεν*. The spirit takes from the scripture, the grand evidence of faith which he had lodged there, and carries it to the hearts of the elect, and then the light and power of divine truth so apprehends and overcomes the soul, that it can no longer resist.

§ 2. *That triumphant evidence*, is no other than the glory and excellency of the gospel scheme of revelation, manifested by the holy spirit in such a manner, as produces full conviction, that

a scheme so glorious could have none but God for its author (k). If the gospel be hid, and

(k) That there is an excellency in the gospel, which when perceived, produces a saving conviction of its divine original, has been largely proved by President Edwards, in his valuable treatise on religious affections: tho' that great man from his sermons on justification, seems to have placed saving faith in the choice of the will. This is not the only instance in which writers of such distinguished abilities in proving one thing, lay the foundation for proving another, not only foreign to their thoughts, but opposite to their sentiments. Professor Lampe of Utrecht, in his dissertation on the formal act of faith, places it in the consent or acquiescence of the will in the gospel scheme of salvation. And yet in his commentary on the gospel of John, and other critical writings, has evidently shewn, that the descriptions of faith which are generally thought to imply choice and affection, are used to denote knowledge or assent.

Mr. Glasse, in his testimony of the King of Martyrs, Edr. 1729. c. 4. Sect. 2. p. 192, 193, 197, 198, 199. has some very judicious remarks on the foundation of the assent in saving faith. The substance of them is. There is an extrinsic evidence for Christianity from miracles, &c. which may stop the mouths of gainsayers, make men attentive to the gospel, and render those inexcusable that openly reject it. This may be, and is clearly perceived by men, that are no ways influenced by the gospel in their practice, having never discerned the glory, or felt the power of divine truth: for many such have as clear wits, and as much thirst for philosophical knowledge as other men. But the faith whereby men are saved, is not begotten by, and does not stand upon this extrinsic evidence, but on the light and evidence which shines in the divine testimony itself, and which when beheld, in so far as it is so, will effectually change men, and conform them to itself in heart and life. None can say, it is impossible that God should reveal his mind and will, and give abundant evidence that it is he that speaks in the revelation itself. Nor that it is impossible, that by means of this revelation, he should form the minds of those, whom he would have to understand it, into a suitableness to this his truth, and make them capable to discern this evidence, in having a true understanding of the truth, which he testifies, and which carries this evidence in itself.

men perish thro' unbelief, it is hid from those, whose minds the God of this world hath blinded, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine unto them. 2 Cor. iv. 4. Where the gospel is discerned in its native lustre and glory, unbelief cannot remain, and souls cannot perish. God begins a saving change on the heart, by shining into it, to give the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ. Ib. ver. 6. It is in consequence of Christ's manifesting the father's name, i. e. his glory, to the men given him out of the world, that they know surely he came out from the Father, and was sent by him. John xvii. 6—8. The grand facts of the gospel were recorded by Luke, that Theophilus might know the certainty of the things wherein he had been instructed. Luke i. 4: and by John, that men might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God. John xx. 31. Remarkable are Solomon's words, Prov. xxii. 19—21. "That thy
"trust may be in the LORD, I have made known
"to thee this day, even unto thee. Have not
"I written unto thee excellent things in council
"and in knowledge, that I might make thee
"know the certainty of the words of truth,
"that thou mightest answer the words of truth
"to them that send unto thee." Here it is plainly asserted, that the excellency of council and of knowledge, which appears in the written word, was stamped upon it for this very end, that from viewing that excellency, men might know the certainty of the words of truth, and be encouraged to trust in the LORD. And that the glory and excellency of divine truth, should actually produce this effect, we learn from Ps. cxxxviii.

4, 5. "All the kings of the earth shall praise thee O LORD, when they hear the words of thy mouth. Yea, they shall sing in the ways of the LORD: for great is the glory of the LORD." The whole paths of Jehovah for man's salvation, shall appear so glorious and worthy of God, that the word which reveals these paths shall be entertained as faithful and worthy of all acceptation, and shall fill the heart with joy, and the mouth with praise. The spirit of wisdom and revelation, by this marvelous light, discovers such unparalleled beauty and excellency, such divine glory, in the person, offices and benefits of Christ, as commands conviction, captivates the affections, and transports the soul with wonder and joy, so that men are pleasantly constrained to believe on an unseen Saviour, to love him, and to rejoice in him with joy unspeakable and full of glory. But my present work is to consider the foundation of the Christian's faith, not that of his love and joy.

This subject has been well illustrated by Dr. Owen, on the divine original and authority of the scripture, Oxf. 1659. and in his treatise entitled, the reason of Faith, Lond. 1677. I shall transcribe a few hints from the last. "The reading the law before all Israel, was the grand means by which their children in all generations, might hear and learn to fear the Lord their God, Deut. xxxi. 11—13. It is supposed, Jer. xxiii. 28, 29. that there is a light and efficacy in scripture, which sufficiently manifests its divine original. Nay our Lord, Luke xvi. 27—31. evidently supposes, that he who is not persuaded by this light and efficacy, would not be persuaded by witness-
"sing

“sing the greatest external miracle, even one
“rising from the dead. The word of prophecy
“is represented more sure than even a voice
“from heaven. 2 Pet. i. 19. The making
“known the mystery of salvation, is described
“as the grand means of bringing men to the
“obedience of faith. Rom. xvi. 26. The Old
“Testament church was condemned for reject-
“ing the antient prophets, many of whom
“wrought no miracles. Consequently there
“was an intrinsic evidence in their doctrine,
“which rendered the rejecting it inexcusable.
“The light not only discovers other things, but
“manifests itself; and the characters of divine
“wisdom, holiness, grace, authority, &c. in
“scripture, are as legible to the faith of the
“meanest, as of the most learned believers.”

Perhaps these hints may go far to solve a phæ-
nomenon, which has considerably puzzled many
curious observers of the present state of religion
in Great-Britain. Never did any age of the
church produce such a multitude of elaborate and
unanswerable apologies for Christianity, especi-
ally in England, and yet never did infidelity more
abound. Does it not deserve enquiry, how far
this may be owing to an unhappy neglect of in-
culcating and explaining these peculiar doctrines
of Christianity, which when seen in their native
beauty, are the grand means of producing and
increasing saving faith?

§ 3. It is no objection against what I have
said, that many discern no such glory in the gos-
pel, as indicates its divine original. Truths
wholly unknown to some, may be as intuitively
evident to others, as general maxims are to all.
A connoisseur can discern beauties in a fine pic-
ture

ture or statue, which wholly escape the vulgar eye. White and black, sweet and bitter are different, and the difference is extremely perceptible, tho' the blind and tasteless perceive it not. Minds enlightened by the spirit, can clearly discern the rays of divinity in the sacred oracles. If others are incapacitated by mental blindness from thus discerning them, that does not diminish their native brightness. The word of God's grace falls with such power and evidence on the soul of the enlightened sinner, that he can no more withhold his assent, than one who has his eyes open and sound, can hinder himself from seeing light at noon day, or than a philosopher can restrain his assent from a mathematical theorem, when his understanding is overpowered by demonstration. As even in these lower cases, the soul is merely passive, it must be much more so here, when a divine power concurs with convincing light, and wherever it comes, perfectly subdues.

Permit me to transcribe a few sentiments from Mr. Barton's analogy of divine wisdom, p. 58, 59. "We find in all human works of the same hand, a certain similitude, whereby a critical observer may, in most cases, determine the author, without any other information. The lines and colourings of a picture shall have such peculiar characteristics, as to perpetuate the name and credit of the artist, without any written eulogy: and pieces seen in different countries shall very justly be attributed to the same author. The proportions of a building shall tell who is the architect, with more truth and precision than a name graven in stone. A stile in writing shall be as distinguishable a

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“ mark, to ascertain the works of the ingeni-
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“ distinguished them living. This observation
“ extends also to moral conduct: mankind not-
“ withstanding the great variety of modes of
“ action, being constant as to national princi-
“ ples, considered as collective bodies; and also
“ each man to his own principles, considered
“ as individuals. Hence arises that opinion
“ which one man forms of another from a mode
“ of action, which shall enable him to judge
“ with great probability, whether any particu-
“ lar action be justly attributed to any particu-
“ lar person.”

The application of these remarks is obvious. Is there a character in the works of men, which indicates their author: and shall we suppose, that in the works of God, the characters of divinity are less evident? Do we not find such characters in the works of creation? The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth forth his handy work. The invisible things of God, even his external power and Godhead, are clearly to be seen from the things that he hath made. In the universal frame of nature, may be read, the greatness, the wisdom and the goodness of the author of nature. If the works of creation, by being what they are, discover whose they are, why should it be thought a thing incredible, that the word of God, that word which we are told Ps. cxxxviii. 2. God hath manifested above all his name, should manifest itself to be God's word, by its own intrinsic light, and beauty, and majesty? Is it improbable, that men should know the Bible to be God's word, in a way

way analogous to that, in which they know the world to be his work? Can we distinguish the face, the voice, the writings of one man from those of another? Does a lamb know the voice of its dam? Can sheep distinguish the voice of their shepherd, from that of a stranger? And why may there not be such an impress of God on his word, as that all whom the God of this world hath not blinded, can distinguish it by that impress from any human composition? Even, as when the sun is arisen, there is no need of witnesses to prove to a seeing man, that it is day.

§ 4. Saving faith may therefore be defined a persuasion that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God, flowing from spiritual views of such a glory in the gospel, as satisfies and convinces the mind, that a scheme so glorious could have none but God for its author. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself." 1 John v. 10. The word of grace is to him instead of a thousand witnesses of its own truth. Such are not "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine," Eph. iv. 14. "But settled and grounded in the faith," Col. i. 23. and assured of the things they have learned, knowing of what divine teacher they have learned them. Such can say to the Redeemer, "We believe, and are sure, that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." John vi. 68, 69. Encouraged by this, they draw nigh to God with true hearts in the full assurance of faith, Heb. x. 21. come boldly to a throne of grace, Heb. iv. 16. And ask in faith without wavering, James i. 6. not questioning the power, the grace, and faithfulness of God thro' a redeemer, tho' they may greatly doubt their

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their own interest in God. An assent to the gospel founded upon such discoveries of its glory, is impossible without the special saving operations of the spirit. "No man can say that Jesus is

"the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." 2 Cor. xii.

3. The man who has no other and higher principle of discerning objects, than that which he brought into the world with him, "the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." 1 Cor. ii. 14.

§ 5. I have said nothing of another ground of certainty, that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God, peculiar to true believers: I mean, their experiencing that he is the Christ, by his enlightening their understandings as a prophet, speaking peace to their consciences as a priest, and renewing their wills as a king. They cannot doubt that he is the God of Israel who hath done for them these wondrous works. Ps. lxxii.

18. God's Son is revealed in them, Gal. i. 16. and by his operations on their hearts, shews himself the Son of God. Hence God promises, Hos. i. 20. "I will betroth thee unto me in faithfulness, and thou shalt know the Lord."

There is evidently a knowledge of God, and faith in him, which precedes in order of nature man's being betrothed unto God. But then there is another knowledge of God, posterior to our spiritual espousals, even a knowledge that God is faithful to his promises, by seeing these promises accomplished to us in particular. But this evidence of God's faithfulness, cannot be the primary foundation of faith, because believing goes before it. It is after we have believed, that

that we are sealed with the holy spirit of promise, Ephes. i. 13. And indeed, this is rather a certainty from our own feelings, than a crediting the divine testimony, that Jesus is the Christ: an assurance of sense, not of faith: and an assurance not only of the truth of the gospel, but of a fact no where revealed there, our own particular interest in God's favour, and in the operations of his sanctifying spirit.

SECTION V.

§ 1. **BUT** as true faith is distinguished from counterfeits by its foundation: so that difference appears by its inseparable attendants and genuine fruits.

The inclinations and behaviour of the men of the world, is considerably affected by objects distant and future, and that consequently cannot be discerned by the eye or other bodily senses. The future revolutions of states are unseen. So are the honours to which the ambitious aspire, the pleasures for which the voluptuous pant, and the riches which the worldly minded covet. If these possibilities have such effects on mankind; does not reason force us to conclude, that the glorious objects of faith, when viewed in their reality and importance, must greatly influence their affections and conduct?

Truth is the food of the soul. The truths of divine revelation are the means of producing, nourishing, and increasing the spiritual life. God works on men in a way suited to their rational natures, and to the established connection between the understanding and will. He begins with

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with enlightening the understanding, that the light and force of truth, may sweetly attract the will to a right choice (1). Thus in God's light the believer *sees light*, thinks and judges of things in some measure as God does, so that God's mind and will revealed in the Scripture, become also his. Where this heavenly Lamp points out the way, he chearfully follows. If he did not resolve, agreeably to the strong and lively impressions he feels of divine truths, he would do himself violence. That light, like the light of the natural sun, while it discovers objects, at the the same time by a powerful influence, quickens, warms, refreshes, and supports. "The light is the life of men," John i. 5. Christ's words are spirit and life, John vi. 63. On this account the knowledge or remembrance of divine things, is frequently put in Scripture for the whole of our duty, *e. g.* Eccles. xii. 1. Exod. x. 8. because divine things, when rightly known and called to mind, in some measure affect and influence, as their various natures require. On the other hand, bad men are said not to know God's ways, Psal. xcv. 10. and though the sins of the Israelites were many, yet often all of them are comprehended in unbelief, Jude 5. Psal. lxxviii. 22. Heb. iv. 2, 3. Not to be affected with qualities in an object, that are in their own nature affecting, is not to perceive these qualities.

It is however the doctrines of divine revelation, rather than the precepts, that are the chief means of sanctification. Love to God, for in-

(1) See Owen on Communion with God, Lond. 1700. P. 15—17.

stance, is not so much excited by the precept, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God*, as by discoveries of God's loveliness and love (*m*).

The fundamental articles of Christianity, relating to the astonishing plan of man's redemption, are admirably calculated to promote holiness of heart and life, and indeed are the grand spring of both. Hence, with the strictest propriety, the gospel is termed the truth according to godliness, Tit. i. 1. and the mystery of godliness, 2 Tim. iii. 16. And doing Christ's commandments, is represented as the necessary evidence, that we know him, and that the truth is in us, 1 John ii. 3, 4. So that when men are said to be sanctified through the truth, John xvii. 19. or to be created in righteousness and holiness of truth, Ephes. iv. 24. the same thing is meant, as when they are said to be sanctified through faith in Jesus Christ, Acts xxvi. 18. and to have their hearts purified by faith, Acts xv. 9. "The corruption of mankind, even where the purest religion is professed, and in theory assented to, does not arise from the weakness of religious principle, but from the want of it (*n*)."

§ 2. A belief that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world, implies a belief that the world needed such a salvation, and consequently a belief of the infinite evil of sin, and the infinite obligations to duty. And this last supposes a knowledge and belief of the infinite glory and perfection of God, whence that obli-

(*m*) See Principal Leechman's sermon at the opening of the General Assembly.

(*n*) Dr. Brown on the Characteristics Essay 2. Sect. 10.

gation primarily arises. Now such a knowledge of God, cannot but influence our dispositions and actions. Even the faith of devils affects them. "The devils believe and tremble." And had men such an apprehension of God's revealed character, as devils have of his severity, it would draw forth love, reverence, and thankfulness, and animate to a chearful discharge of every duty. If we know one to have an amiable temper, we naturally desire his friendship, and carefully avoid whatever may forfeit it. If we believe another wise, honest, active, and benevolent, we readily entrust to his care, even these affairs, about the success of which we are most solicitous. And, without scruple, we refer a just cause to the decision of a skilful and impartial judge. The application of these remarks is easy. He only knows God as just, who fears his vengeance, and is careful not to provoke it: as long-suffering, who is not hasty in his spirit to be angry: as merciful, who readily forgives the offences of his fellow-servants: as the ruler of all persons and events, who is anxiously careful for nothing, and holds on in the paths of duty, leaving events to the divine disposal. "None wander from God, "prefer the flesh and the world before him, and "in their whole lives walk contrary to him, but "from their ignorance of him (o)." These who do not "execute judgment and seek the truth, "though they say the LORD liveth, surely they "swear falsely," Jer. v. 1, 2. What they swear is in itself an undoubted truth, but their professed belief of it is false and hypocritical. They are,

(o) Swinnock's Incomparableness of God, p. 2.

as it follows, ver. 21. "a foolish people, and
 "without understanding, which have eyes and
 "see not, which have ears and hear not." If
 they understood and believed the truth they pro-
 fess, they could not go on thus srowardly in the
 ways of their own heart. If they realized the
 glory of God, the infinite value of his favour,
 that nothing can be against men if he be for
 them, and nothing for them if he be against
 them; they must have concluded, that at all
 times, in all places, and in every possible cir-
 cumstance, it is wrong and unfit to deviate from
 duty. "Were we thoroughly convinced of the
 "amiableness of the divine character, we could
 "not surely avoid imitating it, where such imi-
 "tation is within our power. But the incon-
 "sistency and absurdity of our conduct consists,
 "rather in acting contrary to our own concef-
 "sions and declarations, than to any fixed abid-
 "ing sentiments of our minds. And we have
 "not after all such a real sense of the amiableness
 "of the divine perfections, as by our readiness
 "to take it for an undoubted truth, and to pro-
 "fess it to others, we seem to have (p)."

§ 3. None rightly believe that Christ is a Sa-
 viour, who have not suitable conceptions from
 what he saves. And none can have such concep-
 tions, without perceiving the goodness and ex-
 cellency of the gospel salvation. Damnation and
 salvation are discerned by the believer to be what
 they really are. The first, is therefore appre-
 hended by him, as more terrible than the most
 cruel tortures man can devise: and the last, as

(p) Bulkley's Sermons, Lond. 1752. p. 132.

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infinitely better than any contrary good, which the devil or the world can present to pervert his choice. Compared with these, the gain of sin, and loss of obedience, appear to him less than nothing, and lighter than vanity.

Saving faith always produces a personal application of these truths. When an awakened sinner rightly understands and believes the threatenings of God's law, he must believe, that he himself, in particular, is under the curse. And if we understand and believe the gospel, we must of consequence believe, I say not that our sins are forgiven, but that however great our guilt and depravity has been, or still is, Christ is perfectly able to save us. God attests, not only that the gospel salvation is a reality, and good in itself, but that it is good for us in our present circumstances, and calls and invites us to attend to it as such. Hence it is written, Prov. xxii. 19. "That thy trust may be in the LORD, I have made known to thee this day, even to thee, &c." And Job v. 27. "Lo this, we have searched it, so it is: hear it, and know thou it for thy good." Accordingly, the spirit when he works faith, impresses on the heart a sense of our own concern in what we believe, and disposes us to be suitably affected: so that the soul, though it was passive in receiving that light which produced faith, does not remain so. Right views of the gospel salvation, necessarily engage to improve it, in the manner, and for the ends, for which it was revealed. Seeing that in it, which answers his necessities, the sinner must needs desire it, choose it, and rest and rely upon it. What he firmly believes good for himself in particular, yea, better for him than any thing else,

else, must operate on his will and affections, in proportion to its apprehended goodness, and excite him to follow after it, though at the expence of other things that appear of inferior value. It is no objection to this, that many are abandoned profligates, who yet have some impressions of the happiness of good men, and faintly wish to possess it. For, though a lot among the saints, viewed in a certain point of light, appears to them desirable; they reject it, when considered as connected with self-denial, mortification, and a life of holiness, fondly flattering themselves with superior pleasure in gratifying their unruly appetites. One, who would gladly purchase a commodity, may notwithstanding scruple the price demanded, through rating it lower than its worth. When temptation prevails, some enticing sensual good, or some alarming evil, appears, at the instant of choice, more worthy immediate regard, than the gospel salvation. And thus it could not appear, if the gospel salvation was at that instant believed to be, what it really is. With good reason therefore, the Scripture often represents faith, as the grand preservative against sinning, whether from dread of suffering, or prospect of gain. 2 Cor. iv. 16, 18. "For which cause we
 "faint not, but though our outward man perish,
 "yet the inward man is renewed day by day.
 "While we look not at the things which are
 "seen, but at the things which are not seen; for
 "the things which are seen are temporal, but
 "the things which are not seen are eternal."
 Heb. x. 36, 37, 38. "For ye have need of pa-
 "tience, that after ye have done the will of
 "God, ye might receive the promise. For yet
 "a little while, and he that shall come, will
 "come,

"come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith." See also Heb. xith chap. To know any thing to be greatly desirable, and yet not to desire it; or to be extremely dreadful, and yet not to dread it, and to do our utmost to avoid it, is contrary to human nature.

This necessary connection of faith and obedience, is by no means consistent with the Arminian system. Yet some of the ablest Arminian divines, constrained by the force of truth, have gone far in acknowledging it. I shall only refer to two.

"To say that evidence proposed, apprehended and considered, is not sufficient to make the understanding to approve, or that the greatest good proposed, and the greatest evil threatned, when believed and reflected on, is not suited to engage the will to chuse the good, and refuse the evil, is in effect to say, that which alone does move the will to chuse and to refuse, is not sufficient to engage it so to do; that which alone is requisite to make me understand and approve, is not sufficient to do so; which, being contradictory to itself, must of necessity be false." *Whitby's five Arminian Points*, 2d edit. p. 211.

"What we really believe to be our chiefest good, will still be chosen. And what we apprehend to be the worst of evils, will, while we continue under that conviction, be refused by us," *ib.* p. 212.

"Could we, with the eyes of faith, look up to the throne of God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and discern the innumerable company of angels, &c. a man would no more part with his

“inheritance above, for the short enjoyments of
 “sin, than he would sell the reversion of an earthly
 “crown, for one morsel of meat.” *Bishop Sher-*
lock's Sermons, vol. I. Discourse 14. p. 373. of
 the first edition.

§ 4. I acknowledge my argument would be incomplete, if deliverance from the dominion of sin, conformity to the image of God, and devotedness to his service, were not essential branches of salvation. A persuasion of future misery, may restrain from gross immoralities. But love must be produced by the perception of what is amiable. Men can neither be bribed, nor frightened into love. But, in truth, Jesus died not only to deliver from the wrath to come, but to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works. Now, can salvation, in this view, be perceived to be what it really is, transcendently lovely, and desirable: while the person, who thus perceives it, commits all manner of wickedness with greediness, or, at least, instead of hungering and thirsting after righteousness, allows himself in the habitual presumptuous neglect of certain difficult or unfashionable duties? If slavery and bondage appear irksome and unsupportable; will one contentedly continue under them, and when he may, refuse to be made free? Can one, who counts sin the worst of evils; instead of hating it, delight in it, hold it fast, and refuse to let it go? He who only takes it upon trust, that honey is sweet, may soon be baffled out of it. But if one has tasted that sweetness, all the eloquence of a Tully, would not persuade him that it was bitter. Even so, he who knows the transcendent excellency

lency of holiness, will love it, and choose it, and cleave to it with full purpose of heart. A passage is opened to his heart by that knowledge. And with warmth and earnestness he embraces the promises of sanctifying grace, and in a humble reliance upon them, studies to cleanse himself from all remaining filthiness of flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God.

“ There is a truth in it, that all sin arises from
 “ some kind of ignorance, or, at least, from
 “ present inadvertance and inconsideration, turn-
 “ ing away the mind from the light, which
 “ therefore for the time is as if it were not, and
 “ is all one with ignorance in the effect; and
 “ therefore the works of sin are called works of
 “ darkness. For were the true visage of sin seen
 “ at a full light, undressed and unpainted, it
 “ were impossible, while it so appeared, that
 “ any one soul would be in love with it, but
 “ would rather fly it, as hideous and abomin-
 “ able. But because the soul unrenewed is all
 “ darkness, therefore it is all lust and love of
 “ sin; no order in it, because no light.” *Leigh-*
ton's Expository Works, vol. I. p. 133.

§ 5. But, it is the view of the manner in which salvation was purchased, or, in other words, the view of what Jesus has done and suffered for mankind sinners, that is the grand means of sanctification. Christ's flesh is meat indeed, and his blood drink indeed, John vi. 25. The life, which Christians now live in the flesh, they live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved them, and gave himself for them, Gal. i. 20. By Christ and his cross, the world is crucified to them, and they to the world, Gal. vi. 14. For “ who is
 “ he that overcometh the world, but he that be-
 “ lieveth

believeth that Jesus is the Son of God, 1 John v. 5. The truth, that he who is Son of God and Son of man was lifted up on a cross for man's redemption, is the truth, the knowledge of which sets free the slaves of sin from that base and wretched bondage, John viii. 32. and seq. compared with 28, 29.

Every principle of action, in the human breast, must be affected by this amazing truth.—Are men prompted to obedience, by a sense of the fitness of subjection to God, of the beauties of holiness, of the rectitude of the divine law, and of the hatefulness and injustice of transgression? He who believes in Christ crucified, must feel the force of that motive. For unless he saw, that mankind were under the highest possible obligations to obedience, and that violating these obligations is the highest possible evil, the bitter sufferings of the Son of God, would appear to him unnecessary for man's redemption, and the insisting on them for that end, unsuitable to the wisdom and goodness, nay, even to the justice of God.—Does gratitude enlarge the heart to run in the ways of God's commandments? Surely, the unspeakable gift of the Son of God, tends, above every thing else, to excite that gratitude. The love of Christ constrains thus to judge, that since one died for all, all were dead, and that we who live, are henceforth bound, not to live to ourselves, but to him that died and rose again, 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. All the evils that men or devils can threaten; all the pomp and pleasure, and wealth, that the world can promise; seem contemptible, disappear, nay, are utterly annihilated, by a view of our obligations to redeeming love. This will beget strength, of resolution, and firmness and
forti-

fortitude, in actually doing or suffering for the cause of Christ.—Again, Does example recommend virtue? Never was obedience so recommended, as by the Lawgiver obeying the law, and perfectly fulfilling all righteousness. It is by beholding in the glass of the gospel, the glories of the Lord, that we are changed into his image from glory to glory, 2 Cor. iii. 18. He only rightly believes the incarnation of the Son of God, and all his consequent acts of obedience and suffering, who by contemplating these, has that mind formed in him, which was also in Jesus, and is taught in some measure to walk as Christ also walked.—Or, is it by the fear of God, that men depart from evil? Surely, our being redeemed, not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, is the strongest caveat, thus to pass the time of our sojourning here in fear. One infinitely dear to God, and who had never offended him, must become a curse, to pave the way for delivering from the curse of the law, the guilty degenerate race of apostate Adam. The sword of God's justice awakes against the man that was his fellow; and thus manifests in the most striking tremendous manner, God's infinite displeasure against sin, and the dreadful danger of transgressing his holy law. If judgment was executed upon the Son of God, with such awful severity, when our iniquities were laid upon him; what must be the end of those that live ungodly? But the influence of that doctrine on practical religion, time will not allow me to enlarge upon. It has been well illustrated by Mr. Witherspoon in his Letter to Mr. Hervey, Mr. Jennings in

his Discourse on preaching Christ, and many others.

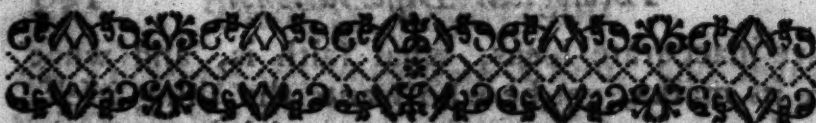
A melancholly reflexion naturally arises, from what has been now proved, with which I shall conclude this Dissertation. Is it not evident, from what we see in the world around us, and what we feel in our own hearts, that faith is not to be found in the generality of those who call themselves Christians, and that even, in the best, it is feeble and inconstant? If men realized the joys of God's chosen, the dreadfulfulness of God's wrath, and the heights and depths of redeeming love; could they, think you, make so light a matter of offending God? Would they be so eager in seeking, so transported in obtaining, so afraid of losing the riches, and honours, and pleasures of life? Or, would they, when deprived of these, account their All lost, and refuse to be comforted? Would they talk of earthly things with such warm emotion, and of heavenly things with such cool indifference? Would thoughts of these last, rarely arise in their breasts, and impress them in a faint, languid, undiscernable manner? Alas! the thoughts, affections, pursuits, words, and actions of men, too evidently show, that the great things of salvation are seldom weighed in that just balance, which would make the best of times comforts, and the worst of her evils appear in comparison light and inconsiderable. Mean time the growth of infidelity will not make that word of God of none effect. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not, shall be damned." An enquiry into the nature and marks of faith, must therefore concern every one, to whom salvation is desirable, and damnation dreadful. And though an heir of glory may have

have inaccurate ideas, what faith is, and what are its marks, yet he who wants the thing itself, (and every unholy person wants it) is as yet in the broad way leading to destruction, nay, is condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on him. Let such therefore, lift up their voice for this heavenly gift, seek it as silver, search for it more than for hid treasures, and never give over seeking and striving (*q*), till God, by his spirit, work in them all the good pleasure of his goodness, and a work of faith with power.

(*q*) The importance of using the means of grace, has, by many writers, been shown consistent with the necessity of supernatural light to produce faith. See *Nymphas to Sospater*. Edin. 1761. Let. 5, and 9.

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DISSERTATION IV.

The LAW of NATURE sufficiently propagated to HEATHENS.

THE PREFACE.

THE following Dissertation was occasioned by reading Dr. Campbell's late book on the Necessity of Revelation, where the insufficiency of mere reason, to conduct men to the knowledge of the existence of the Deity, and the immortality of their own souls, has, with a great profusion of learning to very little purpose, been contended for.

One may, at first sight, imagine, that it argues no good-will to the cause of Christianity, to attack an author who has of late so much distinguished himself in its defence, and who, instead of employing his pen on these mean and insignificant controversies, which have ingrossed the attention of too many of our Scots clergy, has embarked in the defence of our holy religion, in opposition to that torrent of Deism and Infidelity which threatens its destruction. Happy for Scotland there are some who think it a matter of greater importance, to make Infidels converts to the Christian faith, than to render Christians the violent Partizans of a particular sect!

That sentiments of this kind, and a sense of the danger that threatens us from the growth of Infidelity, were

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The PREFACE. 201

the Doctor's motives, in publishing his performance, the principles of charity oblige me to believe. But however much I am pleased with his general design, yet there are some positions laid down in the prosecution of it, that I cannot help refusing my assent to; and this liberty, I am persuaded, the Doctor himself will readily allow me; since, as he observes from the judicious Hooker, "Whatever is spoken of God, or things pertaining to God, otherways than as the truth is," though it seem an honour, it is an injury." To lie for the truth, is not only a needless piece of service, but an injurious one too. Our religion is so strongly attested, and attended with so unanswerable evidence, that it scorns to be supported by Falshood, or raise its fame by slander and detraction. It has a firmer and more stable foundation than the ruins of philosophy. But when arguments in its defence are stretched further than their nature allows, which I am apt to think is the present case, the consequence too often is, that men, seeing an argument has not all that force which an author pretends, conclude it has none at all; nay, perhaps, without further examination, reject the opinion in support of which it is brought.

These considerations prevailed with me to make publick the following reflections, wherein I have, with all the shortness and perspicuity I was able, proposed certain difficulties to the Doctor's scheme. Why the author's name is not prefixed to them it is needless to say. Let them appear in their native strength, without that additional disadvantage, which the publishing such a circumstance would give them.

As the author never made the English language his study, it is hoped any grammatical improprieties, which have escaped him, will be pardoned.

MAY 1741.

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SECTION II

THE design of the learned Dr. Campbell, in his treatise on the *Necessity of Revelation*, is (as he informs us, p. 21.) “to examine the scheme of Deism, laid down in *Christianity as old as the Creation*; where it is asserted, That men are fully able, of themselves, without foreign assistance, to discover all the articles of natural religion that are necessary to their happiness; and that a wise and good God can impose upon mankind nothing relating to religion that is not discoverable by the human mind, or that is not immediately founded in the nature of things: so that if a scheme of religion is offered to the world, wherein there are contained religious articles of faith and manners, that lie beyond human discovery, or have no immediate foundation in nature, but are positive institutions, depending on will and authority, such a system of things can never be admitted as a divine revelation.”

I join with the Doctor in thinking, that the confuting these notions is an infallible way of demolishing Deism; but it is somewhat strange, that when so much time has been spent by him, in confuting one of the articles of Deism contained in these assertions, the other, of equal, if not greater importance, should not be in the least struck at, viz. That men are not obliged to receive any doctrine, whose immediate foundation in nature, when once the doctrine is revealed to them, they cannot discern. A Deist may pretend, that it does not concern him to know how man-

kind

kind originally came by their religion; whether they discovered it by the use of reason, or had it revealed to them by God. But that he sees no obligation on men to receive any doctrine, for which they have not the same evidence which they have for the grand principles of natural religion, viz. A necessary connection with eternal truths; this hypothesis seems not to be in the least shaken by any thing the Doctor has advanced. Nay, people of little charity might be apt to imagine he had some secret view in this piece of negligence, especially as he is pleased, p. 20. to join together, in the same sentence, mysteries and very trifles, as the causes of the divisions and confusions that have arisen in the world.

There are two or three passages in the Doctor's book, which persons of this stamp might alledge to justify such an inference. One is, p. 44. "In matters of religion (says he) no point of knowledge or article of faith, no external or bodily motion enjoined by positive institution, can be of any value or moment, unless they promote an observance of natural religion; so that if any thing can be supposed in the nature of God, or, in his dealings with mankind, in the nature of man, or in the relations between God and man, whereof the knowledge has no influence upon our minds to engage and improve us in the study and pursuit of natural religion, such things must be accounted of no weight or importance. Indeed, the discovery of truth is always agreeable, and the bare perception of such things as are here supposed to relate to God and man, may afford some pleasure to one's mind by itself; but of what consequence can such things prove with respect to

“social beings, when they produce no social
 “happiness, or contribute nothing to heighten
 “and raise our love and devotion towards God,
 “or to excite and enlarge our kind affections to-
 “wards men? One should think, that the
 “knowledge of these things is idle speculation,
 “wherein social beings have no concern or in-
 “terest. And it appears full as evident, that all
 “bodily motions, or external observances, en-
 “joined by positive institution, that do not assist
 “us in cultivating the duties of natural religion,
 “are wholly idle and trifling, and upon no ac-
 “count to be regarded.”

If the Doctor here means, what at first sight one would imagine, that we are not obliged to yield our assent to any doctrine, or receive any positive institution, except we see in that doctrine or institution a peculiar and natural tendency to excite in us love to God, or benevolence to men, or some other particular duty; if this, I say, is his meaning, then what he asserts is utterly false; for God, no doubt, has a right to impose upon us precepts indifferent in their own nature; nay, in some cases, it may be fit to impose such precepts, the better to inure us to obey the law of God, from regard to the authority of the legislator. Now this is an end which any rule that God enjoins must infallibly promote, however trifling it may be in itself. But this is not all: we find subjects are, in many cases, under an obligation to obey the laws of their governors, tho’ they do not know on what account they were enacted; partly because the reasons of some laws may lie above their comprehension; partly because, in some cases, legislators may have just enough motives to enact such and such laws; when,

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when, at the same time, reasons of state may require that these motives should not be publicly known. And if this be so, are not we, short-sighted creatures, under a much stronger obligation to obey the commands of God, which may have the justest reasons in themselves, though we cannot discern them?

If all that the Doctor means is, That except a precept have, at least, a general tendency to promote obedience from a regard to the divine authority, we are not to regard it, then all his flow of language is trifling and useless; for, by this principle, which is certainly a true one, we may be obliged to perform rites not only trifling in themselves, and that have no natural tendency to promote social happiness, but that are burdensome to individuals, and prejudicial to societies. Were not many of the Mosaical rites, and was not the command for extirpating the Canaanites, of this nature? And would not a command, to pull down our houses, and quit our possessions, tho' it would have no tendency to promote social happiness, yet oblige us to obedience on this hypothesis?

There is another passage in the Doctor's book, p. 50. which it is equally hard for me to explain. "The religion of nature, says he, is our most valuable property, and the only sure means of our lasting happiness." How far this reflects on that way of salvation, which the gospel has revealed, or how it is consistent with the words of the apostle Paul, that, "by the deeds of the law no flesh living shall be justified," I leave the reader at liberty to judge.

But whatever be our author's sentiments as to one of the articles of Deism, contained in the passage

passage cited from Tindal; or whatever his reasons for not considering it; yet, without doubt, the part of the argument he here treats is of vast importance; for the shewing that some nations and persons have, notwithstanding their natural reason, been ignorant of the great truths of natural religion, is a proof, though not the principal one, of the great benefit the world has received from Christianity; and, at the same time, an excellent answer to all objections against our religion, drawn from the imperfection of its promulgation; since, if God may suffer natural religion to be in fact not universally known, without any impeachment on his justice or goodness, What should oblige him to communicate the knowledge of revealed religion to all mankind?

I am glad therefore to see that any of our Scots clergy employ their pens in so useful a manner, in opposition to the enemies of religion. But a good cause may be supported by a bad argument; and a good argument may be strained too much. That this last is the case here, will, I doubt not, be made appear in the sequel.

SECTION II.

THE argument the Doctor proposes to make good is, That mankind, left to themselves; without supernatural instruction, are not of themselves able, in the exercise of their reason, i. e. their power of comparing things together and perceiving their relations, to discover the being and perfections of God, and the immortality of human souls, in the knowledge and belief of which all religion is founded. This impossibility

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of discovering these articles, he afterwards informs us, he does not mean to be absolute, i. e. such as, that the supposing mankind to discover them, should involve a contradiction, but only of so strong a nature, that there is no reason to think mankind would ever, in fact, have discovered these truths without revelation or tradition.

In opposition to this, I shall here attempt to prove, That God has afforded the Heathen world such advantages for the discovering and receiving these truths, that their ignorance or disbelief of them could be owing to nothing but their own negligence or perverseness.

Let me observe, then, that though, in some cases, a law may oblige a person, who has no actual knowledge of it, yet it is the opinion of all good moralists, and seems evident from the first principles of the law of nature, that no law whatsoever can be binding on a person who is under an absolute inability of knowing it. Thus Grotius in his excellent treatise, *De jure belli ac pacis*, l. 2. c. 20. § 43. “Nam ignorantia legis, sicut inevitabilis si sit, tollit peccatum: Ita etiam, cum aliqua negligentia conjuncta, delictum minuit.” And, l. 2. c. 23. § 13. he carries the matter still further, and asserts, that no person can act unjustly, without knowing he does so. “Injuste enim nemo agit, nisi qui & scit se injuste agere.” Puffendorff, in his small piece, *De off. Hom. & Civ.* l. 1. c. 2. § 6. says, “Ceterum, ut lex vim suam, in animis eorum quibus fertur, exserere possit, requiritur cognitio tum legislatoris, tum ipsius legis.” Professor Carmichael, in his notes upon that passage, rightly denies this; but, at the same time, intimates there, and plainly asserts in his first Supplement,

plement, § 13. "That, in order to a law's im-
 "posing an obligation on us, there is requisite,
 "not indeed the actual knowledge of it, but its
 "being sufficiently promulgated." His words in
 the last cited passage are, "Sed ut actio quævis
 "humana, vel ejus omissio, constituatur, actio
 "moralis, atque adeo homini imputabilis ut bona
 "vel mala, per supradicta accedere debet lex,
 "actionem istam præcipiens vel verans; Dei ni-
 "mirum voluntas idoneis declarata indicis; iis,
 "sc. circa quæ, ut & circa existentiam conditi-
 "onum, quas forte lex ea supponit, si quis ra-
 "tione sua recte & debita cum attentione utere-
 "tur, ex iis Dei voluntatem, sibi que juxta eam
 "hac in parte incumbens officium, possit cog-
 "noscere." I need not enlarge on this subject,
 as, I believe, none will alledge, that God gave
 a law to men, and punished them for the breach
 of it, while yet, at the same time, he left them
 under a moral incapacity of knowing it. If then
 the law of nature is obligatory upon Heathens,
 and they inexcusable for the breach of it, which
 no Christian, so far as I know, ever yet denied,
 Does it not follow, that it was not a thing so im-
 possible, as the Doctor represents, for them to
 have discovered the precepts of it? I could wish
 the Doctor would explain his sentiments as to
 these points; if a law can bind without sufficient
 promulgation; and if that promulgation can be
 reckoned sufficient, which leaves persons under a
 moral incapacity of knowing a law?

It may perhaps be alledged, as an answer to
 the argument here advanced, that though the ig-
 norance the Heathens lie under of the law of na-
 ture is invincible, yet it cannot excuse them from
 the punishment due to disobedience, as being the
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consequence of original sin, which, in its cause and principle, is voluntary. I shall content myself with Placette's reply to this, (in his *Treatise on Conscience*, l. 2. c. 7.) till once I see its fallacy displayed, viz. "That it may well bear dispute, whether an action is therefore criminal, because it is voluntary in its principle. Let us suppose, says he, a man to have been punished with the loss of his hands for a crime voluntarily committed, Would it not be thought very unjust to command him to work in this his miserable condition? and yet his present incapacity was, as to its principles, voluntary; but being involuntary in itself, it will no doubt be admitted for his excuse." Another supposition may, perhaps, make the application of Placette's observation to the case in hand more easy. In some unknown region, the way of propagating new laws was, to give a written copy of them to every person in the kingdom, with a view to oblige every one to learn to read; and, the better to obtain this design, sufficient care was taken, that no person should be instructed, what laws were made in any other manner. In this kingdom Bævius commits a trespass, for which his eyes are put out; I ask, whether he could be justly punished for transgressing a positive law made in the kingdom, after that punishment was inflicted, when it was impossible for him to learn the knowledge of that law in the common way, and no extraordinary method was provided to inform him of it?

If this answer will not satisfy, Placette gives another in the same place, which, perhaps, may have more weight with some. He observes, that there are some laws which prescribe such duties

as are holy, just and unchangeable in themselves, which yet it is impossible to have had the least suspicion of, without express *Revelation*. The instances in that law which commands us to worship the Son and the Holy Spirit, which certainly, however reasonable in itself, could not have been known without *Revelation*. Having observed this, he infers, that Heathens, invincibly ignorant of the law of nature, could not be condemned, purely because that ignorance was the consequence of a thing voluntary in its principle, viz. original sin, because if all ignorance of this sort were criminal, the ignorance of the worship due to the Son of God, and of other precepts of that nature, must be so likewise; for even of that and such like precepts we could never have been ignorant, had man continued in his primitive perfection.

Since then it was possible for the Heathens to discover the law of nature, it follows, that it must have been possible for them to know the being and perfections of God also; for, without such knowledge, it was impossible for them, if not to perceive a moral difference in actions, at least to learn their duties to God, which, however, make a considerable part of the law of nature.

If it be said, That it was indeed possible for the Heathens to discover the law of nature, but that this possibility did not take its rise from the natural strength of their reason, but from the opportunities they had to learn these truths by tradition, conversation with the Jews, and above all, by the care the civil magistrate used in establishing the belief of future rewards and punishments, and, the divine government of the world, without which he saw society could not subsist; if this, I say, should be alledged, and that of consequence

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all my reasoning here is of no force against the Doctor's hypothesis, I shall grant this a sufficient reply to my argument, if the Doctor will own, that one way or other the Heathens had a power of discovering the law of nature; for this will be sufficient to shew their inexcusableness in acting contrary to its dictates; which, methinks, it will be impossible for one of the Doctor's principles to do, without espousing that hypothesis. But then the Doctor will be obliged, upon this hypothesis, to shew particularly in what way it was possible for the Heathens, notwithstanding the weakness of their reason, to attain such knowledge of the law of nature. A treatise on this subject, judiciously writ, wherein the several opportunities the Heathens had of informing themselves of natural religion and morality, should be traced out, and their different degrees of divine and moral knowledge, according to these different opportunities, shewn; such a treatise, I say, would cast a new light on the origin and progress of religion amongst the Heathens, and would demonstrate, that the care of the civil magistrate, the notions of certain philosophers, the traditions preserved in the heathen world, the opportunities they enjoyed of conversing with those whom God had favoured with a revelation of his will, especially when added to the force of natural conscience, and that strength of reason, which many of the Heathens seemed endued with, were more than sufficient to shew the inexcusableness of the vices of the heathen world. But this, I'm afraid, we have no reason to expect from the Doctor, since he attempts to confute Dr. Hyde and others, (*vide* p. 37. 1.) who have asserted, the Heathens had right notions of mo-
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reality, tho', at the same time, they owned these notions were not the product of rational enquiries. I shall only add, that, had I thought it the Doctor's opinion, that the Heathens, though not by their rational powers, yet by conversing with other nations, were able to acquaint themselves with natural religion, I should have heartily wished his sentiment made good. And tho' certain difficulties would have still remained, one of which is proposed in the next Section, yet, as my grand objection would have been removed, I should hardly have attempted the answering his performance.

SECTION III.

THE last Section only proved, that, one way, or other, the Heathens must have been able to discover natural religion. In this it shall be shewn, that, by bare unassisted reason, they might have made the discovery.

If then it was impossible for bare unassisted reason to discover the being and perfections of God, or the immortality of human souls, there must be some cause, some foundation, some occasion of that impossibility; and there is no cause, so far as I can see, that can be alledged to have had the remotest influence that way, save either that these truths are so unobvious and abstruse, that it is highly improbable our weak understandings should be able to discover them; or else, that the wickedness of mankind is so great, as necessarily to exclude that light, which these truths would otherwise dart in upon them. The first of these cannot be the cause; because, by bare unassisted reason,

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son, men have attained the knowledge of several geometrical and algebraical truths, which required a series of reasoning to come at them, much longer and more subtil than that by which we demonstrate the divine existence. And if reason can discover what is more difficult, why may it not discover what is more easy also? Ask an unprejudiced enquirer, Whether he thinks he could have easilier discovered the *Pythagorick* theorem, or this plain proposition, that as every single effect must have a cause, so a whole series of things that once did not exist no less needs one? Would he, do you think, demur about an answer? Would he not see, that the latter of these truths lies much more level to his capacity, than the former? Neither can it be said, that the wickedness of our minds shuts out that light which these truths would otherwise dart in upon us, and thus that the corruption of our natures is to blame in our not discovering them. This, I find, is an answer in the mouths of several of those who favour the Doctor's principles. Whether he himself will adopt it or not, I cannot judge. When I first heard it proposed, I thought it very plausible, but a little reflection convinced me of my mistake. Let it then be observed, that the only reason why wicked men are averse to believe the existence of a God, the immortality of the soul, and other important articles of natural religion, is, that they see plainly, if these doctrines are true, they must either forsake their beloved vices, or expose themselves to certain ruin; and as they have no mind to do either the one or other of these, they attempt to persuade themselves that

discovering the immortality of religion
on the improbability of its acquiring any

religion is nothing but a cheat. So that it is only the practical consequences of the truths I have just now mentioned, that make wicked men refuse to believe them, when proposed to their consideration. Now, the case is quite otherwise with a person supposed entirely ignorant of the divine existence. By a chain of reasoning that he occasionally falls into, perhaps about motion, or some other natural phenomenon, he discovers this important truth. The wickedness of his mind cannot hinder his making the discovery, because, being entirely ignorant of the consequences of that doctrine, which are the only things he would stand at, these consequences can have no influence upon him to prevent his making the discovery. I grant indeed, that after the truth is discovered, they may prevail with him to reject it, and persuade him there is some flaw in the arguments which led him to the knowledge of it; or, if he does not go so far as entirely to reject it, may at least influence him to detain it in unrighteousness. Which last was certainly the case of many of the Heathens. But how a consequence can have any influence upon the mind before it is known, is, I own, past my comprehension; and yet this must be the case, if we suppose that the practical consequences of the divine existence prevent men from finding out that truth; unless, perhaps, it be said, that the consequences of a doctrine may be known before the doctrine of which they are consequences. But this is as absurd in logicks, as it would be in natural philosophy, to assert, that an effect may possibly exist before the being that causes it. Since then, neither the natural abstruseness of the truths of religion, nor the wickedness of the minds of men, can be the cause, which hinders men from believing religion, must be the cause; because, by bare unassisted rea-

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religion, nor yet the wickedness of our minds, render it impossible for us to discover them, it must be owned there is no such impossibility.

SECTION IV.

WHEN I wrote the foregoing section, the argument contained in which seems almost demonstrative, I could see no shadow of an objection to the former part of it, from the discoveries men had made in the mathematics, where a long and abstruse series of reasoning was necessary to come at a conclusion, to the possibility of their making discoveries in natural religion, of propositions which require a shorter series of reasoning to come at them. I could see no way of eluding the force of the argument, but either by shewing that such propositions in mathematics, &c. were not discovered by unassisted reason; or else, that the first principles by which we come to the knowledge of the mathematics, &c. lie more obvious to human notice, than those by which we come to the knowledge of natural religion. The shewing either of these propositions true, would indeed be a sufficient answer to what I have alledged, but it will be no easy task to make good either of them.

However, as I would not willingly conceal any thing that tends to weaken my argument, I shall here take notice of a passage or two in the Doctor's book, where he argues from the weakness of our understandings, to shew our inability of discovering the fundamental articles of natural religion.

In order to shew the impossibility of mere reason's discovering the immortality of souls, he insists on the improbability of its acquiring any notion

notion of their immateriality. "If, says he, p. 84. now, after all the improvements mankind has acquired, the most abstracted and contemplative philosopher is not able to form any direct or immediate notion of the nature and substance of a pure spirit; how it exists independent of matter, or thinks and operates in a separate state; if this is so, how is it to be imagined, that a man who never was trained to speculation, and therefore only goes upon the ideas he has by his senses, can ever come to suspect there are such beings really existing?" He goes on with a great deal more to the same purpose, in order to shew how hard it is for the mind of man to conceive a notion of a pure spirit; and, to strengthen his argument, mentions several modern opposers of the doctrine of the soul's immateriality, and raises difficulties against it, capable of perverting an unwary reader, without taking any notice of the excellent solutions they have met with.

Not to remark, that it was little to his purpose to argue on the difficulty of men, not accustomed to speculation, acquiring an idea of immaterial substances, when he was enquiring into the abilities, not of the vulgar and illiterate, but of the greatest philosophic geniuses in ancient Greece or Rome ever produced: waving this, I shall only observe, that the whole of the above reasoning rests upon two suppositions, both of them equally false.

The first is, that there was no other way for the ancients to have discovered the soul's immortality, but by inferring it from the immateriality. This is so far from truth, that there were several other propositions capable of being discovered

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covered by these philosophers, that demonstrate the immortality of the soul with the highest evidence, and, in a manner, much more easy and natural, than that by which the immortality of the soul is inferred from its immateriality. Nay, not only might the soul's immortality be discovered by persons not satisfied of what sort of substance it was, from arguments of a moral nature, but even such as supposed it material might have drawn, and, as I shall afterwards shew in the eighth section, probably did draw a very plausible argument for the soul's immortality, from that very hypothesis.

The other principle necessary for the support of the Doctor's argument, is, that reason can discover nothing without having a clear idea of the thing so discovered; for without this supposition, all the Doctor's reasoning will amount to nothing like a proof, that reason could not discover the immateriality of the soul. But the absurdities of such a supposition are too manifest to need being pointed out. Thus it would follow from it, that no positive or negative property of any quantity or number could be found out by any, but such as had distinct notions of the said quantities and numbers, with their said properties: and yet I would much suspect the veracity of a mathematician, who should tell me, he was able to form a distinct idea of all the quantities and numbers, of whose properties he is able to demonstrate somewhat.

This will sufficiently obviate what the Doctor has advanced as to the difficulty of finding out the soul's immortality. In Sect. v. p. 180. & seqq. where he goes on to consider, in the same manner, if the being of God might have been

discovered by mere reason, what he advances has still less appearance of reason. Indeed he sufficiently proves, that mankind would be apt to imagine the heavenly bodies, nay, every thing endued with motion, to be animated. But as to his thinking it equally natural for mankind, upon perceiving how much their interest depends upon the heavenly bodies, to act in the same manner towards them, in order to appease their anger, or engage their favour, as towards one another, and of consequence to kiss the hand to them, and pay them other marks of reverence and esteem, the case is different. For their seeing the celestial bodies equal and uniform in their motions, would make them believe, that their motions were not voluntary, but caused by the power of God, or some other being superior to them. And this would lead them, on the one hand, not to consider the celestial bodies, as the bestowers of these blessings they derived from their influences, and, on the other, excite their gratitude and thankfulness to that superior being, who had so admirably contrived and directed every thing to promote their welfare and happiness. Thus would the heavens have declared the glory of God, and the earth shewn forth his handy work, even to those who imagined them animated by intelligent beings. And, in fact, we find several of the antients asserted the heavenly bodies to be animate, without ascribing divinity to them: nay, so far as I know, Pythagoras, Plato, and Balbus in Cicero, were the only philosophers of character who asserted their divinity; whereas Thales, Aristotle, Lucretius, amongst the antient philosophers, nay, even Maimonides a Jew, Origen and Tycho Brache, Christians,

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Christians, and Herbert a Deist, were of opinion that they were animated bodies.

I know no other objection of moment against my reasoning in the foregoing section, except one, which equally concerns this, and all other speculative arguments on subjects of this nature; but I hope the Doctor will think it sufficiently obviated, by what I am to advance in a following section, on the proper way of determining such questions.

SECTION V.

I GO on now to consider what light scripture may afford us in this controversy; and the first passage I shall mention is the xixth psalm. "The heavens," says the Psalmist, "declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth forth his handy work," i. e. such marks of a wise and powerful efficient cause appear in the celestial bodies, as declare aloud to every person who does not shut his ears against their voice, that God is their creator. I believe I might be excused from taking notice of what some writers alledge, in answer to the argument from this verse, viz. that the Psalmist here speaks of the Jews, and that it is no wonder they, who were already acquainted with the divine existence, should be confirmed in that sentiment, by viewing the works of creation. I shall acquiesce in this answer, when once it is proved, that the heavens are no where visible but from the land of Judea, or that all, save the Jews, are so short-sighted, that they cannot discern them. Mean while I shall only observe, that the Psalmist

mist does not merely say, the heavens illustrate the glory of God, but that they declare it, i. e. discover and make it manifest to those who are ignorant of it. Again, ver. 2. we are told, "That day unto day uttereth speech," &c. i. e. the works of creation are not the only proclaimers of the divine existence, since, almost every day, some occurrences happen of so remarkable a nature, that they are sufficient to teach men, not only the existence of a deity, but that his providence rules over, and disposes of all persons and things, so as that nothing happens in this world without his direction. But lest perhaps it might be alledged, that how much soever the works of creation and providence may preach the being and perfections of a God; yet that all is in vain, since ignorant man is too deaf to hear, or too dull to understand their language: we are informed, ver. 3, and 4. that "there is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard," &c. i. e. There are no nations, however distant they may be in their situations, or different in their languages, but hear, if they do not stop their ears, the voice of these universal heralds, these common instructors of mankind, the works of God, whose language is so plain and obvious, that such as do not understand it, can have none but themselves to blame for that ignorance.

I shall next consider, Rom. i. 18, 19, 20, 21. The apostle there expressly asserts, that the heathens were so utterly inexcusable, in acting contrary to the law of nature, as sufficiently to vindicate the divine justice, in inflicting the severest penalties upon them. The medium he takes to prove this is, that the heathens had the being
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and perfections of God manifested to them by the works of creation. To be more particular, ver. 18. the apostle assigns the reason why the wrath of God is revealed against all unrighteousness of men, viz. because they hold the truth in unrighteousness. How men can be said to hold the truth in unrighteousness, who do not hold it at all, who have no knowledge of it, nay, who are under a moral impossibility of discovering it, is what I own I cannot unravel. Ver. 19. we are told, that "that which may be known of God is manifest in (or as the word may be translated, amongst) them; for God hath shewed it to them," i. e. the natural and moral perfections of God, so far as men can know them, were known among the heathens. Ver. 20. informs us how they came by this knowledge; "for, says the apostle, the invisible things of God, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, &c." Here is it not plainly asserted, that the divine perfections are clearly seen from the works of creation, and that they have been so ever since the world was made? And is not this inconsistent with their sentiments, who not only assert, that it is impossible, by bare reason, to gather the divine being and attributes from the contemplation of his works, but also that such was the condition of the heathens for many ages, after the creation, that they could in no way whatsoever attain the knowledge of these truths?

The second chapter of the Romans affords also considerable evidence of what I am proving. Ver. 12. it is said, that even those who have sinned without the written law shall perish; and, to vindicate the justice of this, we are told, that

natural conscience stands them instead of a law. This the apostle proves, ver. 14. from the virtuous lives of some of the heathens, which demonstrated, that they had some law or rule to direct them by: and, ver. 15. from the power of conscience, in accusing or excusing men, according to their different conduct. Now, what can be the rise of this principle of conscience, but a sense of our being accountable to God for our conduct and behaviour in the world? And it will be hard to shew, how a mind, that has no notion of the divine existence, or its own immortality, could attain such a sense of things.

I shall conclude the section with summing up the evidence the scriptures I have mentioned give as to the point in question, leaving it to the reader to judge, how far they tend to cast the Doctor's cause. We find then, that the heathens were not only capable of discovering the truths of religion, but that they actually knew them; else, how could they be said to *bold the truth in unrighteousness*, or be blamed, because when *they knew God, they glorified him not as God*? Further, that the heavenly bodies, and other works of God, not only proclaimed the divine existence, but proclaimed it with so loud and so clear a voice, that every nation heard the sound thereof. And in fine, that the divine perfections, so far as human reason could know them, were known to the heathens, God having given a clear manifestation of them, by the things he hath made. All this seems not very consistent with the discovery of these truths by unassisted reason, being an event, which in no age, in no particular country of the world, has ever happened,

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ed, nor to the end of the world ever will happen. Which the Doctor confidently asserts, p. 72.

SECTION VI.

IT is now time to consider what proofs the Doctor uses to make good his assertion; and, in the general, he informs us, "That we are to examine questions of this nature, not by speculation, but common experience and matter of fact." And, p. 12. he owns, "That the contrary opinion to his appears very plausible, nay, almost demonstrably true in speculation." If this be really the case, I don't see, but the Doctor may with great ease give up the cause, for which he has so earnestly contended in this performance. Without doubt, forming schemes on mere speculation is often dangerous and unsafe; but yet it must be owned, that when the principles one lays down are certain, and the consequences naturally and unavoidably flow from these principles, in this case, one may safely assent to these consequences as also certain; and this way of determining a question, when it can be had, is much preferable to that of experiment. I may add, that it is impossible, in the present case, for experience to bring the argument to a certainty on the Doctor's side; for, should he prove, that no person as yet, by mere unassisted reason, has discovered the momentous truths of natural religion, it would be as unreasonable for us to infer from thence, that it is impossible for them ever to do so, as it would have been for an angel some hundred years ago to think, that the arts of print-

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ing, the Newtonian system, &c. were things impossible for mankind to discover, because no man before that time had hit upon them. Nay, a still greater absurdity than this would follow from the Doctor's argument, viz. that no being has a power to do or think any thing but what it actually does or thinks; so that it must have been impossible for any power of the divine being to have been without exercise. Whence the eternity of the world may be inferred, nay its infinity also; because, by this way of reasoning, God could not have infinite power without exerting it, and so making an infinite world. Yet, spite of these absurdities, the Doctor asks, p. 72. with an emphasis, "Whether that event can be called possible, which in no age, in no particular country of the world has ever happened?" And he adds, "To the end of the world never will happen. A strange possibility (continues he) this must be, which in no age, in no particular country of the world ever took effect, notwithstanding mankind bent their wits in that particular way, wherein it is most likely to have been effected." Groundless allegation! For the philosophers bent not their understandings to find out the first efficient cause of all things, that being a point little contested in the early ages of the world; but they rather attempted to account for the formation of the world in a mechanical way, in order to shew how ingenious they were in framing hypotheses, or, perhaps, out of a malicious view of persuading their disciples, that there was no necessity of recurring, with the vulgar, to the interposition of God in the production of the universe, since it might be accounted for by what we call second causes, without calling in the first.

SECTION VII.

BUT for once let us suppose, that if unassisted reason has not hitherto discovered the truths of natural religion, it will follow, that it is impossible it ever should. Let us see what the Doctor will gain by this concession. Great as it is, it is too small to do him any Service. For, will he have the confidence to say, that he has examined every thing necessary to give him a full knowledge of the sentiments of the antients, and whence they were derived? That the philosophical sentiments, and religious notions of every age since the creation, and every nation under the sun, are so compleatly known by him, that not one of them has escaped his view? Allow that all the remains of Greek and Roman, Chinese and Arabic antiquity have been searched by him; and that not one of these remains affords a proof that bare philosophy ever found out the truths of natural religion; yet is it not possible, that, spite of this silence in antient records, some philosopher or other, in these nations, might have hit on a series of reasoning that led him to the knowledge of the truths of natural religion, but for fear of the consequences which often follow the venting unauthorised speculations, when opposite to vulgar prejudices, might judge it best to keep his thoughts to himself? But even tho' we should allow, that none of the most penetrating geniuses in these countries were ever capable of such abstruse speculations; yet can he, with equal certainty, affirm, that no country whatsoever, whose history

he has no acquaintance with, ever produced philosophers who made such discoveries? Does he know how matters stand with nations he never heard of or read about? What an admirable way of reasoning would this be? "The countries I am acquainted with, had not reason in such perfection as to discover a God, and the relation that they, as his creatures, stand in to him; therefore the countries I never heard of must have been equally unable to make such discoveries." If this argument is good in the mouth of the Doctor, I should be glad of a reason, why it would have been an unphilosophic conclusion for a barbarous American to have argued, that gun-powder could not have been the invention of mortals, since, had that been the case, some of his sage ancestors, or these wise nations whose annals he was acquainted with, must have invented it. It would be wasting of paper, and tiring the patience of the heaviest reader, to go on in exposing such absurdities.

A very good reason may be assigned, why, notwithstanding men's natural ability to discover the existence of a God, from the contemplation of his works, yet, in fact, scarce any philosopher in these nations, whose records are extant, is said to have made such a discovery. The being and perfections of God were not unknown, but these traditions which the civil magistrate, from a sense of their usefulness to society, made it his business to support, preserved the knowledge of them in the heathen world. Hence, if a philosopher had seen, by speculative arguments, the necessity of admitting the divine existence, he would have found it quite unnecessary, in the early ages of the world, to make public his arguments,

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guments, universal tradition being a sufficient support to the truths of religion; but when once idolatry had crept in, what was before unnecessary would be now unsafe. As that very chain of reasoning which led a man to the knowledge of the divine existence, must also discover to him the unreasonableness, in many instances, of the vulgar religion, the opposing of which might have drawn after it no very agreeable treatment. Thus the first philosophers thought it useless to argue men into a belief of what they were already persuaded of; while their successors, *holding the truth in unrighteousness*, thro' a mean and dastardly principle, concealed their sentiments from mankind, lest, had they published them, they might have suffered for them; and that they might satisfy their own minds as to this dishonourable conduct, they endeavoured either to convince themselves that all religion was but a cheat, and that the arguments which had led them to it were fallacious and inconclusive; or else that it was the part of a wise man, whatever his inward sentiments might be, outwardly to conform to the religion of his country.

To enquire then whether reason ever, in fact, discovered the divine existence, we must turn our eyes to such as had no traditional knowledge of God, and no prejudice against the divine existence. But to find such will be no easy task. An instance however the Doctor may find in Fabricius's account of the writers on the truth of christianity, who, c. 20. mentions a book, entitled, "*Philosophus Autodidactus, sive epistola Abi Jaafar Ebn Taphail, de Hai Ebn Yokdhan, ejus infantis in deserta insula abjecti exemplo ostenditur, quomodo citra institutio-*

“nem humanam, ex inferiorum contemplatione
 “ad superiorum notitiam ascendere possit ratio
 “humana. Arabice cum latina Pocockii ver-
 “sione, Ox. 1701, 4to.” Fabricius refers us,
 for an account of this curious piece, to the Bi-
 bliothèque universelle, T. 3. p. 76. and the
 history of the works of the learned for the year
 1708. p. 365. I have not time to consider the
 genuineness of this account; but I’m sure, if
 genuine, ’tis a demonstration of the falshood of
 the Doctor’s hypothesis; and therefore, I think,
 if he persists in his opinion, he will be forced to
 convince the world of its falshood.

But, perhaps, some will still alledge, that if
 none of the Greek or Roman philosophers, who
 were men of more than ordinary sagacity, and
 as the Doctor informs us, bent their wits in that
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 ed, by bare reason, the truths of natural reli-
 gion, the same may be safely concluded of all
 other philosophers. Tho’, if this be alledged, I
 have already sufficiently obviated it, both in this
 and the end of the former section; yet, for the
 reader’s further satisfaction, I shall shew in the
 next section, that the Doctor’s representation of
 the antient philosophers, is not quite consistent
 with truth, and that they had greater opportu-
 nities to make discoveries in natural religion than
 he seems to think.

S E C T.

SECTION VIII.

§ 1. **W**E are apt to imagine, that the antients were perfect dwarfs in natural philosophy, and unable to have made such discoveries, or invented such arts as later ages; and yet, in many instances, a more accurate enquiry would convince us, that these inventions, of which we so much boast, were known to antiquity, and came to be lost by the ignorance and barbarity introduced by the Goths and Vandals. If I am not mistaken, the art of teaching those born deaf to speak is an instance of this. Vinnius, in his excellent commentary on the institutes, lib. 2. tit. 12. § 3. & l. 3. tit. 20. § 7. laughs at Justinian for providing for a case, which in fact could never happen, viz. that of a deaf man endued with speech; and he declares, in strong terms, that he thinks it absurd for one deaf to utter an articulate sound. Had that ingenious writer been acquainted with the art, which has of late been revived*, of teaching the deaf to speak, he would not so rashly have condemned the emperor, but rather imagined, that in his time that art was known. My observations at present shall be confined to the most ancient philosophers.

§ 2. The philosophers of the Ionick sect, from Thales down to Socrates, employed most of their time in enquiries of a physical nature. In these speculations, they must have made no

* See Morison's Polyhist. tom. 2. l. 2. c. 3. § 23. & seq. & l. 4. c. 1. § 6. & seq.

inconsiderable progress, if we may credit what antient history records. I need not mention Thales's having calculated eclipses. We have facts related of these philosophers still more surprising, and which must argue a degree of the knowledge of nature, and a penetration of judgment, superior, in some instances, to that of modern philosophers. Thus Aristotle, *Pol.* 1. 7. and Cicero de *Divinatione*, l. 1. inform us, that Thales, by astronomy, foresaw, ere winter was past, that next year there was to be an unusual plenty of olives. Anaximander, Thales's scholar, tho' he seems to have been much inferior to his master, yet is recorded to have foretold an earthquake. A piece of skill, which a passage in Pliny's natural history, (l. 2. c. 79. p. 231. edit. Harduini, Par. 1685.) too remarkable to be here omitted, shews many of the philosophers endued with. His words are, "Præclara quædam esse, & immortalis in eo, si credimus, divinitas perhibetur Anaximandro Milesio physico, quem ferunt Lacedæmonii prædixisse, ut urbem ac tecta custodirent: instare enim motum terræ, cum & urbs tota eorum corruit, & Taygeti montis magna pars ad formam puppis, eminens abrupta, cladem insuper eam ruina pressit. Perhibetur & Pherecydi, Pythagoræ doctori, alia conjectatio, sed & illa divina si haustu aquæ e puteo præsensisse, ac prædixisse ibi terræ motum. Quæ si vera sunt, quantum a Deo tandem videri possunt tales distare, dum vivant." What is here said of Pherecydes, is confirmed by Cicero de *Divinatione*, l. 2. The same is related of Anaxagoras by Ammianus Marcellinus, l. 22. and of Pythagoras by Eusebius, præp. ev. l. 10. and Jamblichus, vit. Pythag. l. 1. c. 23.

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These passages are so clear and express, as to the antients having predicted earthquakes, that he must have much of the sceptic about him, who can disbelieve the fact. One of the most judicious critics and accurate reasoners this age has produced, viz. Bp. Warburton in his *Divine Legation of Moses*, p. 318. seems still more to have ascertained it. The story, says he, of Pythagoras's predicting earthquakes, has much the air of a fable, and, I believe, has been generally ranked, as it is by Stanley, with the abundance of idle trumpery, which the enthusiastical Pythagoreans have raked together concerning him. Yet a late relation has fully vindicated the truth of it; and posterity, that could not profit by his knowledge, has, at last, confirmed the veracity of his history. Peter Dudley, Esq; in the *Philosophical Transactions*, No. 437. p. 72. speaking of an earthquake which lately happened in New-England, hath these remarkable words, "A neighbour of mine, that has a well
" 36 feet deep, about three days before the
" earthquake, was surprised to find his water,
" that used to be very sweet and limpid, stink
" to that degree that they could make no use
" of it, nor scarce bear the house when it was
" brought in; and thinking some carrion was
" got into the well, he searched the bottom;
" but found it clear and good, tho' the colour
" of the water was turned whitish or pale. In
" about seven days after the earthquake, his
" water began to mend, and, in three days more,
" returned to its former sweetness and colour." Thus Bp. Warburton, who, in the whole of that excellent performance, has cast a new light on the philosophy and theology of the antients; and

and applied his admirable discoveries to the most noble purposes. But Pythagoras must not have the honour of being the first who foresaw earthquakes from the taste of water. This we must ascribe to the Ionic sect, two philosophers whereof, we are informed in the above-cited passages, foretold earthquakes, viz. Anaximander and Anaxagoras.

If it were necessary, other proofs of the sagacity of these philosophers, and the advancements they had made in the knowledge of nature, might have been adduced. Certainly any, who have the least acquaintance with these matters, must at first sight perceive, that it was impossible for them to have made such discoveries, without a competent knowledge of the theory of motion. This, then, was one of the principal subjects of their researches; and these are the enquiries which I am about to show conducted them to the knowledge of the soul's immortality.

§ 3. The Ionic philosophers imagined, that all life, cogitation, motion, or activity of any sort, proceeded from a soul, which they defined a substance endued with a power to move itself, and other things. Hence they accounted these things, which we commonly reckon inanimate, as the loadstone and amber, to be endued with souls. Vid. Laert. vita Thaletis, p. 161 juxta finem, edit. H. Stephani, 1594. This moving principle was considered as the source of all activity. They observed, that the bodies around them lost their motion, and of consequence their activity. The cause of this they saw, was, that what motion they communicated to other bodies, they lost themselves; but that sort of matter, which

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which thinks within us, (the proper motion whereof, as Plato observes in his *Timæus*, was to think, will, consult, love, hate, &c.) tho' it communicated motion to the body, yet they perceived still retained its own proper motion equal and unvariable, which convinced them, that, in some respect or other, the matter of the soul must have been of a different nature from that of the bodies around us, as it did not lose its motion in the way they lost theirs. Hence they termed the soul incorporeal, not imagining it strictly immaterial, but only of a different nature from the gross and common matter whereof the bodies around us are composed. Since then the soul did not lose its proper motion by the way of communication, (in which it resembled the deity, whose intrinsic perfections are not diminished by their being communicated to creatures) and they could think of no other way whereby it could be lost, they concluded that it would always retain its proper motion, i. e. be immortal. Accordingly we find Thales is mentioned as the first who held the soul's immortality. Vid. Laert. p. 16. probably, because he was the first who argued for it on the principles I have now mentioned; or the first who saw that this opinion was not only supported by tradition, and the universal consent of mankind, but had a foundation in nature and the reason of things.

But Dr. Campbell, p. 121. will by no means allow it probable, that Thales had any notion of the soul's immortality. His reasons are, that Thales seems to reckon the soul nothing but a certain quality in all matter capable of acting or moving; that he attributes a soul to the loadstone, because it moves iron, nay, expressly affirmed,

firmed, that all things are full of souls. From this the Doctor infers, that Thales was too deeply ignorant of the nature of the soul, to have any notion of its future existence. But these very considerations led me to make a quite different inference, viz. That Thales, being persuaded of the natural inactivity of common matter, concluded that all matter which moves, must be moved by a soul: and imagining it unphilosophical to explain the motion of the bodies around us, by the immediate influx of the supreme mind, he chose to say, that every particular body, which acts or moves, was animated by a soul. Let me now account for what the Doctor mentions in the same place, that Thales thought the souls which reside in the upper world immortal, these which are here below mortal. The case probably was, he observed, that whatever influence the sun and other celestial bodies have, in communicating motion, vigour or activity to any thing else, yet they always retained their own proper motion, not losing it by communication; whereas he observed, that stones, and other terrestrial bodies, lose whatever motion they communicate to one another, so that at last all their motion, and of consequence their life and activity, must needs come to an end. But this general observation of Thales, about terrestrial souls, had probably not a few exceptions, whereof this must have been one, that the souls of men were immortal; so that Augustine was probably mistaken, in imagining that Thales thought all souls below mortal, while he only asserted, that the bulk of them were so; or perhaps the expressions used by Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, l. 7, c. 6. were more extensive than the

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ideas that father had in his own mind. It is probable, that Anaxagoras likewise imagined the souls of beasts and men to be equally immortal; for he too ascribed a soul to all sorts of animated beings. His supposing the soul not elder than the body, proves indeed he could not conclude its immortality upon Pythagoras's principles, but he might upon Thales's, whom he seems in many things to have followed.

§ 4. The Doctor observes, pag. 94. & seq. That the reasons of Plato and others, for the immortality of the soul, were of such a nature, that they could never have served as steps to lead them to the knowledge of that truth. But has our author never heard of conjectures having been framed upon very slight grounds, with respect to the existence and properties of things unknown, which time and further care have at last verified? Has not falshood often been used by others, to conduct us to the knowledge of truth, and dispose us the better for its reception? And why may not we ourselves deduce a truth, as a consequence from a doctrine, which is either false, or if true, does not prove it? If very weak reasons will lead a person to believe an error he never before heard of, Why may they not be capable to persuade him of a truth also? Is there some unaccountable aversion in the human mind to truth, and propensity to error, that influences it to receive the latter on the most trifling account, while nothing short of demonstration can prevail with it to embrace the former? As to the argument Plato draws in his *Phædo*, p. 245. from the soul's self-motion, and being always in motion, to prove its immortality, let me offer a conjecture, which several circumstances render not improbable.

improbable. Plato, in the prosecution of his studies, one day hears an Ionick philosopher reasoning for the soul's immortality, on the principles mentioned in the former paragraph. Plato forgets the argument of the Ionick sage, and only retains a confused idea in his mind, that the medium from which it was drawn was motion. This sets him a-working, to hammer out an argument from that topick; and he falls upon that one cited by the Doctor, p. 96, which, however abstruse, confused, and mixed with error, contains in it plain vestiges of the reasoning just now mentioned. The same may be said of another of Plato's arguments mentioned by the Doctor, p. 104. However, I cannot but observe, that it does not look over-ingenuous, to cull out a few weak arguments to an author's disadvantage, who, every one knows, has reasoned admirably well, in other parts of his writings, on these very subjects.

§ 5. The Doctor remarks, p. 102, that all these philosophers, who held the immortality of the soul, did likewise hold its pre-existence, and inferred the former from the latter. How far this is true, I shall not pretend to judge, tho' I have good ground to think, that those of the Ionick school, who held the soul's immortality, did it upon quite different principles; and the Doctor has given us no evidence of their believing the soul's pre-existence; but, however this be, the scheme of the pre-existence of souls was very universally believed. Though this might in part be occasioned from the tradition of all things being created in the space of six days, which it seemed hard to reconcile with the supposing souls every day creating; yet I am apt to think, that

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the fitness of this scheme to resolve several difficulties about the misery of infants, &c. which, to the ancients seemed otherwise unanswerable, was the circumstance that contributed most to spread it; at least it is far from being so wild a delusion, or extravagant a conceit, as the Doctor is pleased to represent it.

§ 6. The Doctor, p. 112. & *seqq.* makes some reflections on the opinion Plato and others had of the transmigration of souls. The truth of the case seems to be this: These philosophers saw that the soul was immortal, and would be rewarded or punished in another life proportionably to its conduct here; but being destitute of a revelation to inform them of the nature and duration of the rewards and punishments of another life, they fell on different schemes as their fancies directed them. Most of their schemes were monstrous and inconsistent, as being the offspring, not of a solid judgment, but of a roving imagination. That which Virgil represents, notwithstanding all its blemishes and defects, is one of the best and most distinct. Mean time, the doctrine of the transmigration does not prove that reason could not lead the Heathens to their notion of the soul's immortality, but only that they advanced things relating to that notion which reason could not support; and we find some, who maintained the soul's immortality, seemed, at the same time, convinced of the whimsicalness of these opinions, which the generality of its asserters embraced. And Xenophon sharply taxes Plato for having deserted Socrates, and embraced Pythagoras's monstrous doctrine of the transmigration. *Xenoph. epist. ad Eschinem*, p. 1000. A proof,

proof, that the genuine disciples of Socrates disbelieved the transmigration.

§ 7. So much for the immortality of the soul. A few remarks will suffice as to what the Doctor has advanced on the notions of the ancients about the divine existence. It has been already observed, that the imagining the sun and stars animate bodies, will be but a poor plea for idolatry, as it had no such tendency to excite it as the Doctor imagines.

But what the Doctor alledges, § 6. "That none of the ancient philosophers, in their searches into the first cause and origin of things, were led to discover the being and attributes of God; but that, on the contrary, they accounted air, fire, &c. the first principles of all things," will deserve some consideration. Three solutions may be given of this difficulty, which I shall just mention, leaving it to the reader to chuse which he likes best. The *First* is that of *Thomassin*, viz. That the first Ionick philosophers, supposing a first efficient cause, as what had never been called in question, spoke only of the second causes, which hitherto had been unknown, and but little searched into; imagining, that had they introduced a God in accounting for every particular effect, the search of second causes would be again laid aside, and men would content themselves with the knowledge of the first cause. But Bayle disapproves of this solution, and rather inclines to think, that the philosophers, despising the poets who were the most ancient heathen divines, as having maintained a variety of opinions without foundation in reason, carried their prejudices against them to such a pitch,

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pitch, as often to oppose an opinion, for no other reason than that the poets defended it. He refers us, for confirmation of this, to Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, lib. 3. cap. 4. p. 662. The last solution is, That indeed these philosophers foolishly reckoned God a material being; nay, that some of them even proceeded so far, as to determine that the deity was such or such a particular kind of matter: But though in this they erred, yet, as they acknowledged in general a first cause of all things, so in particular they ascribed to it most of the properties we do to the true God, except unity and spirituality.

But even in these points Thales might possibly have been orthodox. Laertius informs us, p. 23. That he filed the world, The most beautiful of all things, because it was the work of God. And is not this plainly enough ascribing its formation to one supreme cause? As to the divine spirituality, Velleius expressly asserts, in Cicero's first book on the nature of the Gods, that he said, *God was the mind who had framed all things out of nature.* But Dr. Campbell won't allow the passage genuine, because immediately after Velleius asserts, that Anaxagoras was the first who ascribed to a mind the formation of the universe; and it is not to be supposed Cicero would make him contradict himself in the space of two or three lines. I shall not observe how dangerous it is to reckon a passage supposititious, which must have been in these copies of Cicero that Minucius Fælix and Lactantius used, but rather resolve the difficulty, by proposing an alteration of two letters in the passage about Anaxagoras. Cicero's words are, *Inde Anaxagoras, qui accepit ab Anaximino disciplinam, pri-*
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mus omnium rerum descriptionem & modum mentis infinite, ut ac ratione designari & confici voluit. Change the *primus* into *primam*, and you have at once a solution of the difficulty, and an observation of a difference betwixt Thales and Anaxagoras's sentiment, viz. That the latter only ascribed the original arrangement of things to God, imagining that every subsequent effect would follow in a natural and mechanical way from such arrangement.

§ 8. The Doctor goes on, § 7. to shew, " That these ancient philosophers, who confessed the existence of an infinite mind, had such notions about the formation of things, that it is plain they were not led to the knowledge of the first cause from the effects he had produced. One, (says the Doctor, p. 334.) cannot well imagine what was the *dignus vindice nodus*, the particular effect, wherein Anaxagoras would find it necessary to drag in the agency of an infinite mind, when he makes men and all animals to rise from hothes and dunghills, and the stars to be great stones, torn from the earth by the violent whirling of the æther." But is not a mind just as necessary to the formation of animals, if that disposition of things, which will naturally produce animals, cannot take place without the efficiency of a mind, as if the immediate interposal of a mind were necessary to the forming every particular animal. Now, the former of these was evidently Anaxagoras's opinion; so that the Doctor may easily see what was the *dignus vindice nodus*, that forced that philosopher to introduce a deity.

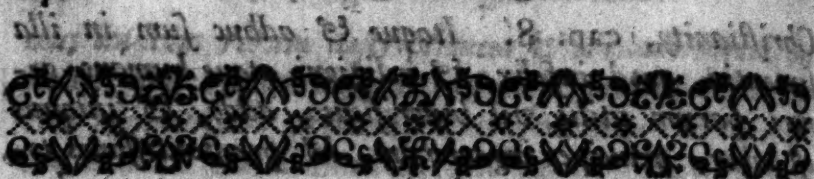
I shall conclude these sheets with the words of Jo. Alb. Fabricius, in his book on the Truth of Christianity,

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Christianity, cap. 8. Itaque & adhuc sum in illa sententia, quod infelix, & religioni atque humano generi parum utilis vel honorificus; addo, & iniquus est labor, principes ingeniorum, & præstantissimos totius antiquitatis viros, invitos ac repugnantes trahere in societatem atheorum, & universum Ethnicismum confundere cum Spinosismo atque Atheismo, cum Apostolus quoque in Ethnicis non tam desideret cognitionem Dei, quam quod Deum quem ex operibus cognoscebant, non tanquam Deum honore sunt super omnia profecuti.

SECTION I.

THE prejudices of many pious and well-
 disposed people, against the late overturn of
 the tyrod of Glasgow and Ayr, concerning the
 doctrine communicating (a), make it necessary to
 acquaint them with the reasons on which that
 overturn was founded, that men of honest minds
 may be enabled to form a just opinion of the
 matter. (1) The overturn of the tyrod of Glasgow and Ayr,
 Glasgow, on the 10th of October 1741, was as follows:
 A proposal from the presbytery of Glasgow, concern-
 ing the more frequent celebration of the sacrament of the
 Lord's Supper, being laid before the tyrod by their com-
 mitted of overture, the tyrod appointed a select commit-
 tee to consider thereof, who reported as follows:
 "The committee humbly propose the following articles
 to the consideration of the very-reverend tyrod; wherein
 they are unanimous in their judgment."
 "That the general proposal from the reverend presbytery
 of Glasgow, deserves the serious regard and attention of
 the tyrod."
 "That it would have an evident tendency to the reviving
 and settling of true religion in the souls of sinners
 and more frequently and abundantly than
 what formerly obtained, that holy ordinance being cele-
 brated only once a year in each parish, (excepting in a
 few places) and in some parishes, but once in two years.
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DISSERTATION V.

ON FREQUENT COMMUNICATING.

SECTION I.

THE prejudices of many pious and well-disposed people, against the late overture of the synod of Glasgow and Air, concerning frequent communicating (*a*), make it necessary to acquaint them with the reasons on which that overture was founded, that men of honest minds may

(*a*) The overture of the synod of Glasgow and Air, Glasgow, 5th October 1748, was as follows:

A proposal from the presbytery of Glasgow, concerning the more frequent celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, being laid before the synod by their committee of overtures, the synod appointed a select committee to consider thereof, who reported as follows:

The committee humbly propose the following articles to the consideration of the very reverend synod; wherein they are unanimous in their judgment.

That the general proposal from the reverend presbytery of Glasgow, deserves the serious regard and attention of the synod.

That it would have an evident tendency to the reviving and promoting of true religion, that the Lord's Supper should be more frequently administered among us, than what generally obtains, that holy ordinance being celebrated only once a year in each parish, (excepting in a few places) and, in some parishes, but once in two years.

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may see if there is cause for that strange and hideous outcry which has been raised against it.

Others, better qualified for such a task, have thought fit to decline it. Several of my Fathers and brethren, both at the meeting of synod, and since, have urged me to undertake it: But their

That, if this be allowed, we must add, that the manner in which this holy ordinance is commonly administered among us, greatly obstructs the more frequent administration of it; and particularly the number of sermons on such occasions, and the many parishes thereby laid vacant on the Lord's Day, are accompanied with several great inconveniences, if not also, too often, with scandalous profanations of that holy Day.

That from all this the committee are of opinion, it would be for the interest and honour of religion, that some method were devised, whereby these inconveniences and abuses might be avoided, and the Lord's Supper more frequently celebrated, agreeably to the word of God, to the apostolic practice recorded therein, to the practice of the primitive church, and that of all other Protestant churches, as well as to several overtures and acts of assembly of this church in former times.

That, in the opinion of the committee, it would answer this purpose, if the Lord's Supper were celebrated at least four times a year, in every parish; and that only one day in the preceding week, either the Friday or Saturday, were employed in public fasting or preparation; and that the sacrament were administered on the same Sabbath in all the parishes of the same presbytery at least.

And lastly, That it may be proper the synod appoint the several presbyteries of their bounds to meet for considering the above proposal, and report their judgment on the several articles thereof to the synod, in April next, in order to the framing of an overture from their synod to be transmitted to next general assembly; and that this be communicated to the correspondents, to be laid before the neighbouring synods, at their next meeting.

The synod, having heard and considered the above report, did approve of the same, and accordingly transmitted, &c.

solicitations would scarce have moved me to publish any thing on the subject, so crude and indigested as what follows, had not some circumstances convinced me, that the silence of those who are convinced of the goodness of the overture has had much worse effects, than could have flowed from even the weakest defence.

The question, whether the synod's overture should be rejected or approved, depends on two subordinate enquiries. Is the design of dispensing the Lord's Supper in every congregation, at least four times a year, in itself good? And are the means proposed for gaining that end, the most proper, and least exceptionable?

§ 2. Let us begin with enquiring if the design of dispensing the Sacrament thus often is in itself a good one.—And here let us for once suppose, that there is no Scripture precept or pattern obliging us to frequent communicating.

Supposing this, it must at least be allowed, there is no restraint laid upon us, in the word of God, from partaking frequently of the Lord's Supper. If no precise time is fixed in Scripture for dispensing and receiving it, and if no precise degree of frequency is enjoined, yet none dare allege, that there is any time in which we are prohibited to dispense and receive that ordinance, or that any degree of frequency is absolutely prohibited. From this it follows, that we are left at liberty to dispense the Lord's Supper as often as is consistent with the right performance of other religious exercises, and the due discharge of the common duties of life.

And if such a measure of frequency is lawful, may I not venture a step further, and pronounce it, if not necessary, yet at least in the highest degree

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gree expedient? If the Lord's Supper is an ordinance of so comforting and improving a nature, as almost all acknowledge it, should we not account the frequent enjoyment of it a privilege? And if God has not deprived us of that privilege, do we act a wise and friendly part for our own souls, in depriving ourselves of it?

To give this argument its due force, let us consider a little the nature and design of the Lord's Supper, and what benefits may be expected by those who worthily receive it.

It is the ordinance our Lord Jesus has peculiarly set apart to keep up the remembrance of his sufferings and death. There we see the loving and lovely *Jesus* laying down his life as a sacrifice and atonement for our sins; and shedding his precious blood to purchase for us a happiness large as our wishes, and lasting as eternity. We see the *Lord of Life* suffering a painful, an ignominious, an accursed *Death*; that by thus fulfilling the condition of the covenant of redemption, he might secure grace and glory, and every good thing, not to us only, but to an *innumerable multitude, which no man can number, of all tongues, and kindreds, and nations, and languages*. We behold the height and depth, the length and breadth of divine love to a perishing world: Of *the Father's* love in inflicting upon him such unparalleled sufferings, that we might not suffer; of his own love and condescension in cheerfully bearing them. We behold *the Son of Man* glorified, in bearing that load of wrath, without fainting under it, which would have sunk a whole world in irrecoverable misery. We behold *God* glorified in him, and all the divine perfections shining with united lustre, the justice of *God* sweetly combining with

his mercy to punish our Surety, that we the offenders might be forgiven. From a deep and heart-affecting sense, that we, and all the children of Men, who obtain salvation, must be wholly indebted to that amazing transaction for obtaining it; we are made to say, "God forbid
 " that we should glory, save in the cross of
 " Christ. We will remember thy love more
 " than wine: We will rejoice in thy salvation;
 " and in the name of thee our God will we lift
 " up our banners: For thou, Lord, hast made
 " us glad through thy work, and we will triumph in the works of thy hands. Thanks be
 " unto God for his unspeakable gift: And blessed
 " be he who hath come in the name of the Lord
 " to save us. Hosannah in the highest."

Ask your own hearts, *O Christians*, are you in any danger of remembering these things too much? And if you remember them at all, can you do it in any better method than that which infinite wisdom has prescribed?

Suppose a *Friend*, who had received a deadly wound in defending us from danger, should, when about to expire, present us with his picture, and recommend it to us with his dying breath, to keep it as a token and remembrance of his friendship and affection.—What would gratitude oblige us to do? Would we cast it into some by-corner out of sight? Would we suffer it to be sullied with dust? or buried under lumber, neglected and forgotten? Would we not rather hang it in our chief room? Would we not honour it, not only by care to preserve it from abuse, but by frequent looks, thereby to renew, and, if possible, to increase an affectionate remembrance how much we were indebted to our departed *Friend*?

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Can we then pretend to honour our Redeemer, when we answer his care in providing and recommending his supper as a representative of his death, by a contrary care, in seeking pretences to lay it aside?

§ 3. The Lord's Supper is a visible badge of our Christian profession.—Nature has taught mankind, and God himself has confirmed it, that every religion should have some solemn rite whereby it may be known to the very eye, from other religions. Circumcision, the passover, &c. under the *Mosaic* œconomy, were all intended, (not excluding other ends) to be signs between God and his people, i. e. rites whereby they might be distinguished from idolaters: And therefore a terrible threatening was levelled against the neglecters of these rites, *that soul must be cut off from his people*: He has put off the badge of my people, and therefore must not share in their privileges. All this being highly rational, *Christianity* has its distinguishing rites, as well as *Judaism* had.

Prayer, thanksgiving, and such-like holy exercises, are common to almost all religions, and observed by the Jew, the Turk, and the Heathen as well as the Christian.—Baptism we receive in our infancy, and without our own consent; and therefore it cannot be the principal criterion of our Christian profession.—But by partaking of the Lord's Supper, we distinguish ourselves from all who despise the gospel of Christ, and testify, in the most public manner, our regard to a crucified Saviour, our concern to keep up the remembrance of his death, and our resolutions to adhere to him and his cause, while by others he is disregarded and set at naught.

Our Lord well knowing how loath we are to undertake any thing difficult, although for the sake of him who was our best benefactor, would not burden us with any number of troublesome ceremonies: And therefore he only appointed this one ordinance, by which we should openly declare ourselves on Christ's side, and proclaim to the world our grateful, affectionate sense of his unparalleled love. Ought we not then to be frequent in thus openly *confessing Christ before men*, while too many are *ashamed of him and his words in this adulterous and perverse generation?*

The Lord's Supper is also intended as a seal and confirmation of the fulness and freedom of the offers of grace in the everlasting gospel. For as really as the minister offers the bread and wine to the communicants, so really God the Father offers Christ, the bread of life, to every one of us for the nourishment of our souls.—And are there any, whose faith is so lively and vigorous, that they seldom need the help of this ordinance to strengthen and increase it?

Is not the Lord's Supper an ordinance, in which God is often pleased to vouchsafe special communion with himself, and his Son Jesus Christ? Does it not greatly tend, through the divine blessing, to strengthen the communion of the mystical body of Christ, and to warm and enlarge our affection to all who love our Lord Jesus in sincerity? Does it not often prove meat indeed, and drink indeed to the fainting soul; a means to convey large measures of spiritual nourishment and growth in grace? Indeed suitable impressions of *Christ's* loving us, and giving himself for us a sacrifice and an offering to God, of a sweet smelling savour, are the great means by which holy dispositions

dispositions are begun, carried on, and perfected in the soul. And what can tend more to awaken a lively sense of these things, than beholding the symbols of the broken body and shed blood of Christ? How many, who went to the Lord's table feeble and faint-hearted, have received such plenteous communications of light and life from the glorious head of influences, that they have been made to renew their strength, to mount up with wings as eagles, to run and not be weary, to walk and not faint?

Who is there amongst us, whose need of the Lord's Supper, for one or other of the above purposes, does not frequently return? Has then God provided for us so rich an entertainment? Does he allow us often to regale ourselves with it; yea, even invite us in the most warm and earnest manner? And, is it not a contempt of the goodness and condescension of God, and injuring our own spiritual interests, to neglect any opportunity of sitting down at the table of the Lord? "Our soul necessities, *says the judicious*
 " *Mr. Willison (d)*, do call for frequency in
 " partaking: For we are oft ready to forget
 " Christ, and therefore we oft need this ordi-
 " nance to bring him to our remembrance. We
 " are oft subject to spiritual deadness, weakness
 " of faith, and decays of grace; and there-
 " fore have frequent need of this ordinance for
 " strength and quickening. There is ground to
 " fear, that the unfrequent celebration and par-
 " ticipation of this blessed feast, which Christ
 " hath prepared for us, is an evil that many in-

(d) *Sacramental Catechism*, p. 86. and *Preface*, p. 9.

“ this church are chargeable with, and for which
 “ the Lord may plead a controversy with us.
 “ How can we expect but he will depart from
 “ us, when we stand at such a distance from
 “ him, and come so seldom near him in the me-
 “ thod he hath appointed? Can we look for the
 “ smiles of Christ’s countenance, when we live
 “ so much in the neglect of his dying words? Is
 “ it any wonder our hearts are so hard, when
 “ we are so seldom applying the blood of Christ
 “ for softening them; or that our graces be so
 “ weak and withered, when we so little use the
 “ means for strengthening and cherishing them?
 “ Is not the frequent use of this ordinance, in
 “ the way Christ hath appointed, an excellent
 “ help to soften our hearts, renew our repent-
 “ ance, strengthen our faith, inflame our love,
 “ increase our thankfulness, animate our resolu-
 “ tions against sin, and encourage us to holy
 “ duties; and shall we willingly neglect it? It
 “ is no wonder that we complain we miss what
 “ we aim at and expect in this ordinance, when
 “ we are so little sensible of former neglects. It
 “ is a sad sign our receiving of the sacrament is
 “ not right, when it leaves not in us earnest
 “ breathings for the like opportunity. It is im-
 “ possible for us to meet with Christ, and taste
 “ of his sweetness and fulness in this ordinance,
 “ and not long for another meeting.” Thus far
 Mr. Willison. Many excellent reflections to the
 same purpose may be found in Charnock’s *Works*,
 vol. II. p. 758,—768, which those who have the
 book would do well to peruse.

§ 4. The two preceding paragraphs abund-
 antly prove, that if frequent communicating
 cannot be urged as absolutely necessary, it may
 safely

safely be recommended as highly expedient and beneficial. But, perhaps, upon inquiry we shall find in Scripture an express injunction of frequency; nay, of a precise degree of frequency in partaking of the Lord's Supper. For, that a prince should require a tribute to be paid him by every one of his subjects, and yet never express what sum should be paid, and at what time, is incredible. In like manner, I cannot easily bring myself to believe, that our Lord should require his church, to the end of the world, to eat bread, and drink wine in commemoration of his death, without specifying how often he would have it done.—The Jews, though they understood not the utmost signification of the *Paschal* rite, yet had full directions how often, and in what day they were to sacrifice and eat the Lamb. If then the word of God has assigned no precise time for partaking of the Lord's Supper, will it not follow, that the gospel is more obscure than the law; and that our Lord, when he took the vail from off Moses's face, covered with a thicker vail his own?

1 Cor. xi. 26. bids fair for containing such a special direction. *As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew forth the Lord's death till he come.* Dr. Bury observes (c), that the words, *this bread, and this cup*, must refer to some particular bread and cup, well known among the Jews, of which, as often as they eat and drank, they were bound to remember the sufferings of Christ. That accordingly (if we may credit Buxtorf and Leo Modena) it was usual at their feasts, for the master of the house, to take a loaf of bread, and

(c) Constant Communicants p. 32.

bless and break it, and give to each person about the bigness of an olive; and if there were three or more eating together, to take a glass from off the table, and bless it also, and give to each of the guests a little of the wine in the glass.—If these remarks be well founded, it will follow, that if the Jews knew how often they had such festivals, that was direction sufficient how often to partake of the Lord's Supper.

But I mention this, rather as a subject of inquiry, than an hypothesis with which I am fully satisfied. There are many natural and obvious objections against it, which I do not think that ingenious writer has removed.

Dr. Wettenhall has offered another conjecture (*f*), that a certain determinate frequency in communicating is enjoined in these words, 1 Cor. xiv. 23. *This do ye, as oft as ye drink, in remembrance of me.* He observes, that the particle *it* is not in the original, and is not supplied in the vulgar Latin, the Syriac, or any of the old versions. He then goes on to argue thus: “If
“ with our own, and most modern translations,
“ we supply the particle *it*, and thereby under-
“ stand the cup in the sacrament, this makes the
“ command to signify just nothing. For, what
“ sense is there in this form of speech, *Drink this*
“ *cup, as oft as ye drink it?* Or, if we repeat the
“ noun, instead of using the pronoun, *Drink this*
“ *cup in remembrance of me, as often as ye drink this*
“ *cup in remembrance of me.* We must therefore
“ conclude, that the verb *trinke*, stands here
“ absolutely, or by itself. And probably it is
“ used in the *Hellenistical* sense of the word for

(*f*) Due Frequency, &c. p. 6,—13.

“ feasting

“ feasting or banqueting, and so the text will
 “ run thus, *Do this in remembrance of me, as often*
 “ *as you feast, or, on all your holy feasts.* Now,
 “ for as much as every Lord’s Day was, even
 “ when this epistle was writ, already among the
 “ Christians a holy feast, therefore the com-
 “ mand will come to thus much, *Do this, or ce-*
 “ *lebrate my supper every Lord’s Day at least.* At
 “ least, I said, for other holy feasts they might
 “ have besides the Lord’s Day, but this most
 “ surely they all had. See 2 Pet. ii. 13. Jude
 “ ver. 12. compared with 1 Cor. xi. 20, 21.
 “ The plain meaning then of the command, *This*
 “ *do, as oft as ye drink, in remembrance of me,* is,
 “ I know that you, my disciples, will keep every
 “ first day of the week as a holy feast, with joy
 “ and gladness, in memory of my resurrection;
 “ and I intend so to order it. Now, see that
 “ every such day you remember my sufferings
 “ too, as well as my resurrection.”

These are the only passages that look like an
 injunction of any precise degree of frequency in
 partaking of the Lord’s Supper. Mr. Charnock
 has indeed cited one from the Old Testament for
 the same purpose. “ The practice, says he (g),
 “ of weekly communicating perhaps was ground-
 “ ed on Ezek. xliii. 27. *And it shall be upon the*
 “ *eighth day, and so forward, the priest shall make*
 “ *your burnt-offerings upon the altar, and your peace-*
 “ *offerings, and I will accept you, saith the Lord.*
 “ A prophecy of gospel times, and the cessation
 “ of the ceremonial law of daily sacrifices: By
 “ burnt-offerings being meant the Lord’s Sup-

(g) Charnock’s Works, vol. II. p. 756.

“ per

per, the remembrance of the great burnt-offering whereby our peace was made: And by peace-offerings, prayer and thanksgiving, which are called sacrifices, Heb. xiii. 15. And on the Lord's Day, being the eighth day, following upon the seventh, the Jewish Sabbath." But I much doubt if the primitive Christians, fond as some of them were of allegorizing and mystical interpretations, ever carried their regard for these to the ridiculous height of building upon them a practice of such importance as weekly communicating. It is more probable their practice was founded on a New Testament precept, plain to them, tho' to us dark and obscure.

§ 5. But that obscurity will be no plea for our seldom communicating. For whatever difficulty there may be in finding an express precept, the *Apostolical Example*, which is as binding as a precept, is so clear and obvious, that he who runs may read it. And to me it seems something strange, that those who suppose the apostolical practice sufficient to change the *Sabbath* from that day on which God, in the *fourth Commandment*, had enjoined it to be kept, should pay so small regard to it in this instance, where it alters no command moral or positive, but serves to clear up a material circumstance in observing a precept which otherwise might seem indeterminate.—Let us therefore take a survey of such passages of Scripture as throw any light on this important subject.

§ 6. The sacrament was instituted by our Lord that night in which he was betrayed. From this circumstance, allow me to remark, that it may lawfully be dispensed on other days, as well as the Sabbath.

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§ 7. Less than a week after, even the very day of our Lord's resurrection, being the first day of the week, and the *Christian Sabbath*, the Lord's Supper is again dispensed by Jesus himself (b). For that day, while two of the disciples are walking together to *Emmaus*, Jesus comes up with them, and takes occasion, beginning at Moses and all the prophets, to expound to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. But tho' this heavenly preacher speaks to them as never man spoke, still they were ignorant it was he: fond, however, of his company, they constrained him to abide with them, as the day was far spent. And it came to pass, says Luke (i), as he sat at meat with them, he took bread and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them: and their eyes were opened, and they knew him. Jesus could have discovered himself to them how and when he pleased. Sure then, he who does nothing in vain had some wise reason for chusing to do it in these, rather than in other circumstances. And what reason so probable, as to put a distinguishing respect on the sacrament of the supper, by making it the first means of manifesting himself to these disciples? Why else were the *disciples* so careful to report this circumstance? And why was the *evangelist* (j) so punctual to record, that they reported not only the thing, but the manner, in what manner he was known to them by the breaking of the bread? Must then our Lord's chusing this manner of manifesting himself to them preferably to all others; must the care of the *disciples* in reporting this manner; and must the care of the

(b) Luke xxiv. 13. compared with ver. 1.

(i) Luke xxiv. 30, 31. (j) Ibid. ver. 35.

evangelist in recording both the one and the other: must all this, I say, be imputed to mere chance? Did they account this an *insignificant circumstance*, tho' they appear to lay *particular stress* upon it? And tho' they seem to *honour* it, did they intend that we should pass it by without the *least regard*? I know not how a rational answer can be given these questions by such who interpret the passage of common bread. Cartwright betakes himself to a strange shift. *It was not*, says he, *the breaking of bread itself, by which Jesus was known to his disciples, but something peculiar in his manner of asking a blessing before meat.* Is not this commentary a plainly contradicting the *text*? And can that cause be a good one, which reduces so able a critic to so poor an evasion?

The expressions used by *Luke* in this passage (*k*), seem so parallel to his expressions when recording the original institution of the sacrament (*l*), that I am persuaded few would have mistaken his meaning, had not the church of *Rome* misapplied this passage, to prove from the example of our *Lord*, that it is sufficient to distribute the *bread* in the sacrament without the *wine*.—But would it not have been easy to have confuted that sophism, by observing, that *eating of bread*, is a phrase for the whole of a feast, and therefore the mention of it does not exclude other ingredients of a feast. Besides, the *papists* themselves allow, that tho' the *bread* may be distributed without the *wine*, it is never to be consecrated apart. But here is no mention even of the consecration of the *wine*. If then the *evangelist's* silence is no proof that the *wine* was not conse-

(*k*) *Luke* xxiv. ver. 30.

(*l*) *Ibid.* xxii. 19.

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crated, it is as little proof that it was not distributed.

From this passage I remark, (1.) That the Lord's Supper was the first religious institution, in which our Lord, after his resurrection, manifested himself to his disciples. (2.) That this ordinance was twice dispensed by Jesus himself in the space of a week. (3.) The evangelist's remarking, that it was dispensed to the two disciples the first day of the week, seems an intimation, that our Lord intended it should be a principal part of the sanctification of the *Christian Sabbath*.

§ 8. Acts ii. 42. we are told of Peter's converts, that they continued stedfastly in the apostle's doctrine, and in fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayer. The words *καὶ προσκατεβαν*, which we render *continued stedfastly*, properly denote constancy, or perseverance in an exercise, or waiting continually upon any thing, as appears from the use of the same word, Acts i. 14. vi. 4. viii. 13. and x. 7. Rom. xii. 12. and xiii. 6. And therefore whatever is meant by *breaking of bread*, it is plain they were as constant in that, as in attending on the apostle's doctrine, and public prayer. All then we have to inquire is, if the expression relates to the Lord's Supper, or to a common meal.

Dr. Whitby explains it of the latter, in his notes on this passage. "I see, says he, no necessity to think these words relate to the receiving of the sacrament, for the phrase of the *breaking of bread* is used by the evangelists, Matth. xv. 36. and Mark viii. 19, 20. when they relate Christ's miraculous feeding the multitude."

But

But in answer to this, I would observe, (1.) That the argument does not require us to maintain, that *breaking of bread* must always relate to the sacrament. It is enough to our purpose, if the expression is capable of that sense, and if the scope of this passage makes it necessary here. (2.) That the phrase is capable of being understood of the sacrament, is universally allowed; and Dr. Whitby himself explains it of the sacrament, Acts xx. 7, 11. It is used by Luke eight times (*m*), and by Paul thrice (*n*); and in all these passages, except Acts xxvii. 35. it is almost certain it relates to the Lord's Supper: and even that passage is applied by Tertullian (*o*) to that ordinance. Ignatius, a writer in the apostolic times, uses the same phrase of *breaking of bread*, where he is plainly speaking of the Lord's Supper (*p*). (3.) The other exercises mentioned here, in conjunction with *breaking of bread*, are all of them religious exercises, attendance on the apostle's doctrine, fellowship, prayer. What then hath breaking of common bread to do in such company? It adds strength to this argument, that Justin Martyr (*q*) and Tertullian (*r*) mention the Lord's Supper, and the other exercises of which Luke here speaks, as stated exercises of the worshipping assemblies of christians. (4.) The Syriac version of the New Testament, which is the best and oldest extant, and probably was composed in the apostolic times, if not by the apostles themselves, as Mr. Jones has strongly shewn, in

(*m*) Luke xxii. 19. and xxiv. 30, 35. Acts ii. 42, 46. Acts xx. 7, 11. and xxvii. 35. (*n*) 1 Cor. x. 16. and xi. 24. (*o*) Tertul. de Orat. cap. xxiv. (*p*) Ad Ephes. cap. xx. p. 19. (*q*) Justin Martyr Apol. ii. p. 98. (*r*) Tertullian Apol. cap. xxxix.

his excellent book on the *canon*; that version, I say, interprets breaking of bread, of the eucharist: and most of the fathers were of the same opinion (s).—From all this we may infer, that in the public assemblies of the primitive christians, breaking of bread in remembrance of Christ, was as stated an exercise as attending on the apostle's doctrine, joining in prayer together, or communicating to the necessities of their poor brethren.

§ 9. It is said of the same persons, Acts ii. 46. *And they continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread in a house, did participate the food with gladness and singleness of heart.*

Suppose we were to retain the common translation, *breaking of bread from house to house*, that would be no conclusive argument, that the Lord's supper is not intended: for the multitude of the faithful might render it inconvenient for all to partake of the sacrament in one house, and on that account, it might have been dispensed successively, in different houses.

But our translation is plainly faulty, and the cause of the mistake is easily traced out: καὶ ἡμεῖς, in the first clause of the verse, signifies daily, or from day to day: and hence it was imagined, κατ' οἶκον must signify, in every house, or from house to house: whereas it is evident, from the use of the preposition κατὰ, when applied to place, that it denotes some precise determinate place. See Luke viii. 39. x. 32, 33. xvi. 14. and xxiii. 5. Acts ix. 42. xi. 1. xlii. 1. and xvi. 7. 1 Cor. xvi. 19. Col. iv. 15. Philem. ver. 2.

(s) Vide Suiceri Thes. tom. ii. p. 195. And Obs. Sacr. p. 139.

and

and never relates to more places than one; except the substantive to which it is joined be in the plural number, as Luke xiii. 22. Acts v. 15. viii. 1, 3. and xx. 20. or be connected with an adjective denoting universality, as Acts xv. 36. Accordingly Scaliger observes, that in an old Roman inscription, *τραπεζαριοι κατὰ πόλιν*, does not signify *the treasurer of every town*, or *the treasurer from town to town*, but *the treasurer of the town*, viz. Rome. To confirm these remarks, I might observe, that neither the Arabic nor Syriac version renders *κατ' οἶκον* *from house to house*, but only *at home*, or *in a house*.

The temple being a house of prayer for all nations, that part of worship the disciples were at liberty to perform there; and accordingly they continued daily with one accord in the temple. But they could not dispense the sacrament there, without drawing upon themselves certain destruction. They were therefore under a necessity of holding private conventicles for that purpose, in places where they might be in less danger of disturbance.

Both Jews and Proselytes were careful to provide a large upper room in their houses for religious exercises. What more probable, than that the primitive christians having performed their daily devotions in the temple, at the hour of prayer, should then repair to a large upper room to partake of the Lord's supper, perhaps that very upper room in which our Lord instituted the sacrament, Mark xiv. 15, 22. and where the eleven continued, with Mary, in prayer and supplication, Acts i. 13, 14 (1). This is the more likely

(1) Vide Jos. Mede, in Operibus, p. 322. Gregor. in Obser. Sacr. cap. iii. & Personium in Lectionibus ad Actus Apostolicos, p. 31.

from what we are told, Acts v. 42. *Daily in the temple and in a house,* (for so it should be rendered) *they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.* In the temple, to convert infidels; in the private house, to strengthen and confirm believers.

From this passage, it is probable, that the church at Jerusalem received the Lord's Supper every Day.

§ 10. The next passage, to our purpose, is Acts xx. 7. *And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, &c.*

From this passage it is plain, (1.) That it was the custom of the first christians to keep the Lord's day holy, or as a day appointed for religious worship, and accordingly to hold their public solemn assemblies on that day. St. Paul did not call them together as he did the elders of the church, ver. 17. but the disciples were themselves *συνεληντο*, met in their assembly. The context informs, that Paul tarried at Troas seven days. Tho' he was hasting to Jerusalem, he did not, as he easily might have done, summon an extraordinary assembly on any of these days, but contented himself with more private labours; and chose rather to delay his journey till the return of the first day of the week, when he was sure of a full assembly of christians. (2.) The great design of their meeting was to break bread, i. e. to celebrate the Lord's Supper. This was with them a constant branch of the sanctification of the sabbath: and perhaps their thus remembering the death of Christ on that day, is none of the least causes of its being termed *the Lord's day*. It adds probability to this, that Chrysostom (u) terms

(u) Chrysost. Hom. v. de Resur.

the Sabbath *the day of bread*. Shall we then, on the Lord's day, omit an exercise from which it principally derives so honourable a name?

§ 11. That in all church meetings the Lord's Supper was dispensed, is further evident from 1 Cor. xi. 20, 21. The apostle had said a little before, that their meeting together was not for the better, but for the worse: this he proves from their behaving themselves so in these meetings, that they neither did nor could eat the Lord's Supper as became that holy institution. *When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's Supper*, i. e. it is not so to do it as that sacred action ought to be performed. Now, this argument evidently supposes, that whenever they assembled together, they came to eat the Lord's Supper; for otherwise their coming together, so as not to eat the Lord's Supper, would be no proof that their coming together was for the worse. Had the apostle charged the Corinthians, as guilty in some particular meetings in which the Lord's Supper was immediately concerned, we had then understood, that it was not a constant exercise in their worshipping assemblies: but on the contrary he charges them with profaning the Lord's supper in all their meetings: and what is termed *coming together*, ver. 17. *coming to the church*, ver. 18. *coming to one place*, ver. 19. is termed *coming together to eat*, ver. 33 (w.) Which shews, that whenever the christians

(w) *Coming together to eat* is an expression as liable to be perverted by the Papists, for excluding the laity from the cup, as Luke xxiv. 30. and Acts ii. 42. But none, to ward off that silly argument, have ever said that the passage has no relation to the sacrament. Why then need they say so in these other instances?

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fiants met together in one place for religious exercises, eating of bread was a part of their employment.

SECTION II.

WE have, in the preceding section, demonstrated, from the sacred oracles, that, in the days of the apostles, dispensing the sacrament was as stated an exercise in the meetings of the faithful, as Prayer, hearing the word, or collecting for the supply of their needy brethren; and that accordingly in the church at Jerusalem, they had daily communions, and in every church communions at least once a week. Let us next view how this pattern has been regarded or slighted in after-ages, and with what success.

How the first ages of the church conducted themselves in this matter, is well known to all in the least conversant with church history: so that I need only refer such to a few of the many who have writ on this subject (*x*), and save myself the trouble of saying any thing about it. But, for the sake of my unlearned readers, I shall give a short abridgment of what may be found more at large in these writers.

The practice of those who lived in the very infancy of the church, must deserve peculiar regard. Their thorough acquaintance with the style in which the New Testament was writ, the

(*x*) *Calvini Inst. lib. iv. cap. 17. § 44.—46. Buddei Inst. Theol. Dogm. lib. v. cap. 1. § 19. Dr. Cave's primitive Christianity, Part I. cap. 11. Sir Peter King on the church, Part II. chap. 7. § 6. Waterland on the eucharist, chap. xiv.*

customs, to which it alludes, and with many other peculiarities which are now almost buried in obscurity; but especially their conversing with the apostles, or their immediate disciples, must give them great advantages for understanding the religion of Jesus. And as many of them sealed their doctrine with their blood, we cannot reasonably entertain the least suspicion, that they would dare knowingly to alter the least circumstance in the last, the dying command of their dear master.

§ 2. Pliny, in his epistle to the emperor Trajan (*b*), wrote about the year of Christ 110, which was only six years after the death of the evangelist St. John, acquaints the emperor, that he had found nothing to alledge against the christians, but their obstinacy in their superstition: and that it was their custom to meet together on a set day before it was light, and to sing a hymn to Christ as God, and to bind themselves by the sacrament, that they would commit no wickedness.

Justin Martyr, who wrote, A. D. 155, is another witness (*c*). On the day, says he, that is called Sunday, all the christians meet together, because that is the day of our Saviour's resurrection, and then we have read to us the writings of the prophets and apostles. This done, the president makes a speech, exhorting the people to practise what they have heard. Then we all join in prayer: then bread, wine, and water are brought forth, and the president having again

(*b*) Plin. ep. lib. 10. Ep. 97. Seque sacramento obstringere, &c. (*c*) Justin Martyr, Apol. ii. p. 98.

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poured out prayers and praises to God, there is a distribution and communication made of the sacramental elements. Last of all, those that are willing and able contribute what they think fit for the relief of the indigent.—How exactly does this account of the worship of the primitive church tally with that of St. Luke, Acts ii. 42?

Tertullian, who lived about A. D. 200 (*d*), takes notice of some, who declined receiving the sacrament on the stationary days (Wednesdays and Fridays) for fear of breaking their fast; and blames them for this as a foolish scruple.—This passage not only proves that he thought it a duty incumbent on the faithful to communicate as often as possible, but that it was then a common practice, to communicate on other days as well as Sundays.

Minutius Felix, who flourished A. D. 230. speaks of the christians assembling to eat on a solemn day (*e*).

Cyprian (A. D. 250.) tells us, that *daily communions* were the common practice of his time (*f*). And Fortunatus, his cotemporary, made use of the fourth petition of the Lord's prayer as an argument for communicating daily.

Victorinus Petavionensis (A. D. 290.) tells us, that it was usual on the Lord's day to receive the sacrament (*g*).

(*d*) Tertullian de Orat. cap. xiv. p. 136. (*e*) Epu-
las die Solenni coeunt. Min. Fel. p. 30. (*f*) Cyprian
de Orat. Domin. p. 209, 210. ed. Bened. Eucharistiam
quotidie ad cibum salutis accipimus, &c. (*g*) Vict.
Petav. de Fabric. Mundi ap. Cave, p. 103. Die dominico
cum gratiarum actione ad panem exeamus.

Basil, about the year 372, recommends communicating *every day*; and informs us, that it was the practice of the church of Caesarea, where he was, to celebrate the sacrament four times a week, viz. on Sunday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday (*h*).

Ambrose, bishop of Milan, who was cotemporary with Basil, or whoever is author of the tract, in his works, *de Sacramentis*, justly blames the infrequent use of the sacrament among the Greeks, where some communicated only once a year; and seems to intimate that *daily communions* were in use at Milan (*i*).

St. Hierom tells us, that they were likewise kept up in his time, (i. e. about the year 390.) in the churches of Spain, and at Rome (*j*).

Augustin (about the year 410.) tells us, that the eucharist was received by many on Saturday, as well as the Lord's day, *every week*; and by some even *daily* (*k*).

§ 3. These passages are more than sufficient to prove, that during the *first four centuries*, the sacrament of the Lord's supper was dispensed even oftner than once a week, and that it was a constant branch of the sanctification of the sabbath. Let us next shew how it came to be otherwise, and what was the consequence.

The learned Dr. Waterland observes, that during the *first three centuries*, we meet with no canons made to inforce frequent communion; scarce so much as exhortations to it, or any complaints of neglect in that article, which is an ar-

(*h*) Basil, ep. 289.

cap. 4. p. 449.

(*k*) Augustin. ep. 118. ad Januar.

(*i*) Ambros. de sacram. lib. v.

(*j*) Hieronym. ep. 52. ad Lucin.

gument, that Christians in those times were not tardy in that respect, but rather forward and pressing, under a high notion of the privilege and comfort of partaking of the holy communion (1). Tertullian, who lived in the close of the second century, observes, as I remarked in the former Paragraph, that there were some who scrupled to communicate Wednesdays and Fridays. But even that shews, they had no scruple at communicating every Lord's day.

But in the *fourth century*, defection from the primitive purity of the church began more and more to appear. The most probable cause, I can assign for this, is, that till then the religion of Christ being persecuted, few professed it who had not felt the power of it on their hearts. But soon after, Christianity becoming the established religion of the Roman empire, a greater number of hypocrites, from views of worldly interest, intermingled themselves with the true disciples of Christ: and in a century or two more, this *little leaven leavened the whole lump*.

Such nominal Christians could have no just sense of the use and benefit of the Lord's supper, and the obligations to frequent it. Having only a form of godliness, without the power of it, it is no wonder that the frequent return of religious exercises should be uneasy and disagreeable to them. Their example would soon be followed by lukewarm Christians, *who had fallen from their first love*.

About the year 324, it was decreed at a council held at Elibiris in Spain, that no offerings should be received from such as did not receive

(1) Waterland on the eucharist, chap. xiv.

the Lord's supper (*m*): which shews, that some who called themselves Christians, were beginning to neglect the dying command of their professed Lord.

About the year 341, a council at Antioch decreed, that all who came to church and heard the scriptures read, but afterwards joined not in prayer and receiving the sacrament, should be cast out of the church, till such time as they gave public proof of their repentance (*n*).

Towards the close of the fourth century, men grew more and more cold and indifferent about the Lord's supper; so that the eloquent Chrysostom complains, "In vain stand we at the altar, none care to receive (*o*)."
And in another place, after he had represented the danger of unworthy receiving, he adds, "I speak not this, to deter you from coming, but from coming carelessly; for as there is danger in coming carelessly, so there is famine and death in the not partaking at all. This table is, as it were, the sinews of our soul, the girding up of the mind, the support of our confidence, our hope, our health, our light, our life (*p*).

The first council of Toledo, in the year 400, enacted, that those who were observed never to come to the communion, should be admonished; and if they did not reform, obliged to submit to penance: and that such of the clergy as came not to the daily prayers and communion should be deposed, if they did not reform after admonition (*q*).

(*m*) Concil. Illiberit. can. xxviii.
Antioch. can. ii.

(*n*) Concil. Antioch. can. ii.
(*o*) Chrysost. Hom. iii. in Ephes.

(*p*) Chrysost. in 1 Cor. x. Hom. xxv.
i. can. v. xiii.

(*q*) Concil. Tol.

From this decree it is plain, that tho' the sacrament was daily dispensed to such as were willing to receive, yet, that the neglect of that ordinance had begun to infect the clergy as well as the people. Yet hitherto this was a fault, with which only particular persons were chargeable, and warmly testified against, not only by the most eminent fathers, but by the public canons of the church.

But about the year 410, St. Augustine being consulted, whether it was best to communicate daily, or on such particular days when we were best prepared, gave this answer, "Neither he who communicates daily, nor he who does not, really dishonours the Lord's body and blood, while both contend only in a different way, who shall do most honour to the blessed sacrament. For neither did Zaccheus and the centurion strive together, or one prefer himself before the other, when the former gladly received our Lord into his house, and the latter said, *I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof.* Both did honour to our Saviour, tho' in contrary ways, and both found mercy. So here, one out of reverence dares not partake every day; another from the same reverence dares not omit it a single day. All is well, so long as in either case the ordinance is not contemned (r)." It is probable this decision gave the first rise to the notion, that men might pay their reverence to the sacrament by turning their back upon it; and that our Lord's command, *Do this in remembrance of me*, was as much honoured by forbearing his table as by fre-

(r) Augustin. ep. cxviii. ad Januar.

quencing it. And indeed it is strange, that even the name of St. Augustin could make such a notion blindly followed. However we must observe, as some excuse for that worthy *Father*, that the question proposed to him was, Shall a man communicate every day? But had the question been, Is communicating *once or thrice a year* sufficient? he, no doubt, would have answered, No; and recommended weekly communions, as *Gennadius* did, in the close of the same century, tho' he would give no decision as to daily communions (1). I might add, it is plain, from *Socrates* and *Sozomenes*' church histories (2), that *weekly communions* were greatly kept up till the last year 450. *Socrates*, however, tells us of two exceptions. "Whereas, *says he*, all churches through the world, on the Sabbath day, in every revolution of the week, celebrate the mysteries, they of Alexandria, and they of Rome, on a certain, antient tradition, have refused to do it." Probably the church of Rome was principal, that of Alexandria only accessory, in this peculiarity: For Alexandria drawing considerable sums of money from Rome, for the corn with which she furnished that city, might the easier be led to imitate the Roman customs: However others too soon followed their pattern. We see then to what we owe the neglect of weekly communions, even to the pretended traditions of the church of Rome.

At length communicating weekly, or even monthly, begins to appear burdensome. The greatest part received the sacrament only three

(1) *Gennadius* inter *August.* op. tom. viii. app. p. 78. Ed. Bened.

(2) *Socratis*, lib. v. cap. 21. & *Sozomen.* lib. vii. cap. 19.

times a year, and some not so often. This occasioned the council of Agde or Agatha in Languedoc, met in the year 506, to decree, that none should be esteemed good Christians who did not communicate at least at the *three* great festivals, Christmas, Easter, and Whitsunday (*u*); and accordingly, from that time forward, those of the church of Rome esteemed themselves, in so far good enough Christians, if they communicated thrice a year, and that it was presumption to receive oftener (*v*). But in the Greek church, which was more distant from the fountain of corruption, it was usual to communicate weekly, even so low as the *seventh* century; and such as neglected *three Weeks* together were excommunicated (*w*). And in the *eighth Century*, Bede gave it as his opinion, that daily communions would be highly salutary to Christians *. But that opinion not being very consistent with the doctrine of transubstantiation, which now began to be broached in the church, met with but small regard; so that in a short time it became the general practice to communicate only once a year, at Easter; and this the council of Trent seem to account sufficient (*x*).

It was then the church of Rome which introduced seldom communicating; for which, as for all their *Innovations*, they pretended an *ancient Tradition*; and by which they alledged mens reverence for that ordinance would be heightened: And indeed so it was, till *Veneration* gradually in-

(*u*) Concil Agath. Can. xviii. (*v*) Bedae, ep. ad Egbert, p. 311.

(*w*) Theodor. Penitent. p. 46.

* Vide Let. v.

(*x*) Concil. Trid. Sess. 13. Can. 9.

creasing, at length produced *Adoration*, and the blasphemous absurdity of a *Waser God*. A striking instance how dangerous it is for Christians to pretend to secure reverence to the institutions of their *Lord*, by methods different from those which he himself has appointed; and that it is our only safety to adhere to the plan delivered us in the writings and practice of those who were under the infallible guidance of the *Spirit*, without turning aside to the right-hand or to the left. If we do otherwise, how prudent soever our measures may seem, and however pious our intentions may really be, we have in so far rejected the word of the *Lord*; and what wisdom can there be in us?

§ 4. The reader may possibly now expect an account what has been the practice of the purest reformed churches in this matter: But my small acquaintance with books, which can throw light on this inquiry, permits me to say but little on this head.

In Bohemia the holy supper is usually celebrated four times a year. They dispense it oftener when the need of the faithful requires it; but thus often they enjoin it to be dispensed for the sake of uniformity (y).

A national synod of the Protestants in France, met at Charinton 1644, give it as their judgment, "That though the Lord's Supper is dispensed in their church only four times a year, greater frequency would be desirable, the reverence requisite at the Lord's Table being preserved, that so Saints might increase in faith,

(y) Account of the church order and discipline in the unity of the brethren of Bohemia, chap. iii. § 4.

" through

“ through frequent partaking of the sacrament,
 “ as the primitive church did (z).”

The Lutherans have a communion every Sunday and Holiday throughout the year (a). And though the number of communicants is often but small (b), yet it is usual among them to communicate three or four times a year (c).

The church of England enjoins, that “ in
 “ every parish church and chapel, where sacra-
 “ ments are to be administered within this realm,
 “ the holy communion shall be ministered by the
 “ parson, vicar, or minister, so often, and at
 “ such times, as every parishioner may commu-
 “ nicate at least *thrice* in the year (d).” It is well known, that many of the clergy in that church have recommended, and that many of the well-disposed among their laity practise, a much greater frequency.—This has given occasion to some, to asperse the Synod of Glasgow’s overture, as paving the way to Episcopacy. But is it not abundantly consistent with the most rigid Presbyterian principles, to take a lesson from our sister church, where her practice approaches nearer the Scripture standard than ours? Is her observing an institution of Christ any reason for our neglecting it? The purest church on earth may learn something from churches less pure. And whatever some do, I shall never esteem it a mark of purity, to say to others, *Stand by, come not near me, for I am holier than thou.* The more we have

(z) La Discipline des Eglises Reformes de France, cap. xii. § 14.

(a) Johnson’s unbloody Sacrifice,

Part ii. p. 151.

(b) Calvoer de tit. ecl. t. i. p. 758.

(c) Buddei Inst. Theol. Dogm. lib. v. cap. i. § 19.

(d) Canon xxi. of the Province of Canterbury.

of true religion, the more will we have of a humble, teachable disposition, and a willingness to be instructed, even by our weaker brethren. I wish 1 Cor. xii. 21. & *seq.* were more considered. Progress in reformation can never be expected, when the best things are rejected that other churches practise, under pretence of guarding against their corruptions. I cannot but observe, that Cartwright (*e*) and Calderwood (*f*) charged the church of England with too seldom communicating. So different was the opinion of these great and good men, from that which now prevails. And I am well informed, that a great part of those who were ejected for non-conformity in Charles II's time, dispensed the sacrament *monthly*. I have now in my custody, manuscript Memoirs of a private Christian, who lived in the time of the civil wars in England, who, I find, received the sacrament, with great profit, the *first Lord's Day* of every *month*, at the meeting where Mr. Ash, a member of the Westminster assembly, and Mr. Robrough, one of their scribes, were ministers: And that if any incident prevented the dispensing the sacrament the first Sabbath of the month, it was done, if possible, the Sabbath next following (*g*).

The churches in New England have no times universally stated for their celebration of the Eucharist. Some have it once in *four weeks*, some in *six*, some in *eight*: Some the first Lord's Day in every Kalendar month, and some the last. And

(*e*) Cartwright's Reply to Whitgift, p. 117.

(*f*) Calderwood's Altare Damascenum. (*g*) The manuscript is intitled, *The Growth of a Christian*, and was lent me by Mr. William Hog, merchant in Edinburgh.

the pastors reserve to themselves a liberty of altering the times as they judge fit upon emergencies. The pastor gives notice a week beforehand, that the Lord's Supper is to be dispensed. In most places there are held private meetings of Christians on some day of the week preparatory to the communion: And it is a frequent thing for the pastor to be present at some or other of them; or else, perhaps, to hold a public lecture (*b*).

From the form of dispensing the sacraments, composed by Calvin for the use of the church of Geneva (*i*), it appears, that the Lord's Day preceding, intimation was made to the people, that they might prepare for that holy ordinance; and that strangers, who inclined to communicate, might converse with the minister. On the Sacrament Day, the minister, at the end of the sermon, explained the design of that ordinance, and how it ought to be received: Or, if he judged it necessary, spent his whole sermon on that subject. How often in the year the sacrament was dispensed, is not there mentioned; but from Calvin's zeal to revive even weekly communicating, it is probable it was at least once a month: especially as Calvin approved the Book of common Order of the English church at Geneva, where Knox was minister; which Book takes notice, that the Lord's Supper was commonly used by them once a month, so oft as the congregation think expedient (*k*).

(*b*) Cotton Mather's Account of the Discipline in the Churches in New England, p. 95, 96. (*i*) Apud Calvini Tract. Theolog. p. 39, 40. (*k*) Book of common Order; &c. Preamble to chap. x.

I had almost forgot to take notice, that the Greek church celebrate the sacrament every Sunday, and solemn *Festival*, in their great churches, and that the laity are obliged to receive it *four times a year* (m).

§ 5. I now go on to represent the practice of our own church in her best times.

Before the reformation, in the year 1558, the few godly preachers that were in the kingdom, were forced by persecution (like the primitive Christians, Acts ii. 46.) to teach God's word, and administer the sacrament in the fields, or in private houses (n): so that their situation did not admit of stated times for communicating.

The 29th of April 1560, the great council of Scotland, laid their orders upon six ministers, whereof Mr. John Knox was one, to commit to writing their judgment touching the reformation of religion. Upon this they drew up the first book of discipline, and presented it to the great council, May 20th, 1560. Mr. Knox warmly urged, that it should be publicly approved. And though he could not obtain this, yet, as private men, the whole body of the first *Reformers* signed it, the 17th January, 1561, acknowledging it to be good, and according to God's word, and promising to set it forward to the uttermost of their power. The general assemblies, July 30th, 1562, December 25th, 1562, and December 25th, 1563, seem to consider it as binding on the church.

Their opinion touching the times of dispensing the Lord's Supper, they give in these words (o),

(m) Smith's Account of the Greek Church. (n) Mr. Wodrow's manuscript of Mr. Row's History, p. 5.

(o) First Book of Discipline, chap. xi. § 5. of Dunlop's edition.

“ Four-times in the year we think sufficient to
 “ the administration of the Lord’s Table, which
 “ we desire to be distineted, that the supersti-
 “ tions of times may be avoided so far as may
 “ be; for your honours are not ignorant how
 “ superstitiously the people run to that action at
 “ Pasche, even as if that time gave virtue to the
 “ sacrament; and how the rest of the whole year
 “ they are careless and negligent, as if it apper-
 “ tained not unto them, but at that time only.
 “ We think therefore most expedient, that the
 “ first Sunday of March be appointed for one
 “ time to that service: the first Sunday of June
 “ for another; the first Sunday of September for
 “ the third; and the first Sunday of December
 “ for the fourth. We do not deny, but any se-
 “ veral kirk, for reasonable causes, may change
 “ the time, and may minister oftener; but we
 “ study to repress superstition.” An injunction
 follows to catechise, especially such whose know-
 ledge was suspected, before the administration of
 the sacrament. But there is not the least hint
 of week-day’s sermons before or after the com-
 munion.

At the fourth general assembly which was
 holden at Edinburgh, December 25th, 1562, and
 of which Mr. John Knox was moderator, it was
 concluded, “ That an uniform order should be
 “ kept in the administration of the sacraments,
 “ solemnization of marriage, and burial of the
 “ dead, according to the book of Geneva. *Item,*
 “ That the communion be ministred *four times* in
 “ the year within burrows, and *twice* in the year
 “ in the country parishes. The superintendents
 “ were appointed to confer with the Lords of

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“ Secret Council anent the charges to be bestowed for the elements at the Lord’s Supper (p).”

It being reported in the general assembly holden at Montrose, in March 1600, that some abstained from the communion, under colour of deadly feuds, and other light causes, it was ordained; “ That the presbyteries command every particular minister, within their bounds, to take up the names of all within their parish, that they may communicate every year once at least; and thereafter summon them to compare before the presbyteries, to hear and see themselves ordained to *communicate within three months after the charge* (q).” From this it seems plain, that the sacrament was then dispensed once every *three months*; and this is my only design in mentioning it; for in other respects it was highly blame-worthy.

The general assembly met at Glasgow, 1638, appointed a committee to consider what constitutions should be revived or made of new. The 12th article of their report was “ anent order to be taken that *the Lord’s Supper be more frequently administered*, both in burgh and landward, than it hath been these years bygone; it were expedient that the act at Edinburgh, December 25th, 1562, be renewed, and some course be taken for furnishing the elements, where the minister of the parish hath allowance only for once in the year (r).” This shews, that in the times betwixt 1600 and 1638,

(p) Mr. Wodrow’s copy of Calderwood’s manuscript History, vol. I. p. 792. See also Calderwood’s printed History, p. 816. (q) Ibid. p. 837. (r) Acts of the general assembly from 1638 to 1649, p. 50.

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seldom communicating had again crept in. We all know these times were none of the best. However, even then there were some, and these the best friends of the *Presbyterian* interest, who dispensed the communion oftener than once a year. I need only mention the celebrated Mr. David Dickson, then at Irvin, who dispensed the communion *twice* in the year (*s*); and Mr. Robert Blair, who dispensed it *four times* in the year, at least after he went over to Bangor, in the county of Down in Ireland, where he was a chief Instrument of the great revival of religion in that corner (*t*). If I had leisure to consult the printed or manuscript Lives of other eminent men in these times, I doubt not but many such instances could be given.—But to return; the good men

(*s*) *Christians from many other places of the country resorted to the communions at Irvin twice in the year.* Account of Mr. Dickson in Livingstone's manuscript Account of the Ministers and Professors of his Time, p. 144. of Mr. Wodrow's copy.

(*t*) The work of the Lord began to prosper. Mr. Cunningham of Holywood helped us very much, and his little parish was a good example to ours. We often preached the one for the other. We agreed also among ourselves to celebrate the sacrament of the Lord's Supper *eight days* in the year, *four* in his, and *four* in mine. So that proficients in both did all these times communicate together. Mr. Blair's manuscript Account of his own Life, p. 71. of Mr. William Hog's copy. It is evident from that same manuscript, p. 94,—97. that the ministers in the bounds of the county of Down and Antrim, who were many of them Scotsmen, had, at least, one stranger assisting at their communions, and a sermon on the Saturday, and another on the Monday. But all this was in the church where the sacrament was dispensed. For Mr. Blair mentions it as something unusual, that by an unexpected croud, he was obliged to preach in the court of a Castle.

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concerned in the *Reformation* 1638, were sincerely desirous to promote greater frequency in remembering the dying love of Jesus. And accordingly the Assembly referred the above-mentioned article to the *Committee's* report to the consideration of Presbyteries; and declared that the charges should rather be paid out of that day's collection, than that the congregation want the more frequent use of the sacrament.

A pamphlet was printed at Edinburgh, 1641, intitled, *The Order and Discipline of the Church of Scotland*. The author only observes in the general, that the Lord's Supper is more frequently ministered in some congregations than in others, but he does not mention how often in any. He informs us, p. 21. "The Sabbath next, before the communion shall be celebrated, public warning thereof is made by the pastor, and of the doctrine of preparation to be taught the last day of the week, or at least towards the end of the week, that the communicants may be the better prepared by the use of the means both in public and private." Here is no mention of any other minister's assisting the minister of the parish, nor of any *Fast-Days* or *Thanksgiving-Days* regularly observed before and after the sacrament. On the contrary, it is said, p. 24. "The communion being thus celebrated in the forenoon, the people meet again in the afternoon, at which time the minister teacheth the doctrine of thanksgiving, and closeth the public and solemn worship of that day, from which the people use to depart refreshed with the grace and peace of God, and strengthened with new and fresh resolutions to serve the Lord."

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In the 14th Session of the Assembly met at Edinburgh 1645, of which Mr. Robert Douglass was Moderator, the opinion of the committee for keeping the greater uniformity in this Kirk was laid before them, and, after serious consideration, approved in all its articles, and ordained to be observed in all time hereafter. Among other things they enjoined, " That there be no reading in the time of communicating, but the minister make a short exhortation at every Table; that thereafter there be *Silence* during the time of the communicants receiving, except only when the minister expresseth some few short sentences, suitable to the present condition of the communicants in their receiving, that they may be incited and quickened in their meditations in the action. That when the communion is to be celebrated in a parish, *one Minister* may be employed for assisting the minister of the parish, or, *at the most, two*. That there be *one Sermon* of preparation, delivered in the ordinary place of public worship, upon the day immediately preceding. That before the serving of the tables, there be only one sermon delivered to those who are to communicate, and that in the same Kirk there be one sermon of thanksgiving after the communion is ended. That the minister who cometh to assist, have a special care to provide his own parish, lest otherwise while he is about to minister comfort to others, his own flock be left destitute of preaching (u)." *and ministered*

(u) Acts of the General Assembly from 1638 to 1649, p. 267, 268.

It

It is now time to enquire, how the present rareness of communions, and the multitude of week-days sermons before and after them, was first introduced. And all I can do, is to mention two or three probable conjectures, as I know no certain account of that matter.

It began, says one, in the persecuting times, when many ministers under hiding, and the whole Presbyterians of a country, by stealth, got together. And when they met for this end, it may be once in several years, they knew not how often to preach; and the people had a boundless appetite to hear, so long as they could be subsisted and safe. But though the persecution they were under sufficiently excused their so seldom receiving the Lord's Supper, is it possible for us to vindicate our conduct, who live in quiet and peaceable times? It was necessary with them, and therefore not blame-worthy: It must be choice with us, and therefore criminal.

The author of *Dan in Beersheba*, gives the following account of the matter, from two books printed at London, 1657. (viz. *Uldericus Veridicus sive de statu Ecclesie Scoticanæ*. And, *A true Representation of the Rise, Progress, and State of the Divisions in the Church of Scotland*;) both of them writ by public Resolutioners. The General Assembly say they, in the year 1645, did establish an order for preventing confusion in the celebration of the sacrament, with which *the whole church* were satisfied. Yet, since our divisions, our dissenting brethren have taken up a new and irregular way of dispensing the holy Supper, whereby they have turned it, either into a theatrical pomp, or into the *Popish* error of *opus operatum*. It is but seldom they dispense this ordinance. But when it comes

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comes to be administered in a church where any of them is minister, even they who are in the remotest parts of the kingdom, being warned, flock to them. To those of their own party, of whatever parish, the heavenly bread is distributed, while most of their own parishioners are excluded. They have a great many ministers assisting them, six or seven, nay, sometimes double that number, whose congregations are generally left destitute of preaching that day. Every day of their meeting, viz. Saturday, the Lord's Day, and Monday, (*N. B. They had then no Fast-Days*), many of these ministers do preach successively one after another; so that three or four, or sometimes more, do preach at their *Preparation*, and as many on the Monday following. And on the Sabbath sometimes three or four preach before they go to the Action, besides those who preach to the multitude of the people, who cannot be contained in the church. Never before were there so many sermons in any church in so short a time. These practices, as they are a clear violation of the order unanimously established in the church, and do occasion great animosity and alienation of simple people against those ministers who will not imitate those irregular courses; so uninterested observers perceive a clear design in all this, to set up themselves as the only zealous and pious people, worthy to be trusted and followed in our public differences? Which if it be not an injury to that sacred ordinance, and an improving that, which should be a bond of unity and communion, to be a wedge to drive and fix a rent, let the judicious and sober judge.—Possibly some of these reflections were too severe, and dictated by Party Spirit:

Spirit; yet there is ground to think they were not wholly without foundation.

It is not improbable, that the practice of the ministers of the counties of Down and Antrim, about 1626, many of whom afterwards came over to Scotland, might contribute to multiply sermons, particularly in the fields, before and after communions. But when the spirit is carrying on a remarkable work of conviction and conversion, as he then was in these counties, things may be fit, which at other times would be highly unreasonable (v).

After the *Revolution*, the Lord's Supper continued to be seldom administered; sermons on the Fast-Day, Saturday, and Monday, were kept up, and many ministers employed to assist. The general assembly 1701, to remedy these things, recommended it to presbyteries, "to take care, " that the sacrament of the Lord's Supper be " more frequently administered in their bounds; " and that the number of ministers to serve " thereat be restricted, so that *neighbouring churches* " be not thereby cast desolate on the Lord's " Day (w)." *See Letter 2, p. 279.*

The sixth act of the assembly 1711, gives so strong a proof of the zeal of our church for frequent communicating, that I cannot but insert it intire. " The general assembly considering, " that, in some places, the sacrament of the " Lord's Supper is administered only in the *Summer* season, where-through people are deprived " of the benefit of that holy ordinance during the " *rest of the Year*, do therefore recommend to

(v) See Letter 2, p. 279. (w) Act 19. Assem. 1701.

" presby-

“ presbyteries to do what they can to get it so
“ ordered, that the sacrament of the Lord’s Sup-
“ per may be administered in their bounds, thro’
“ the *several months of the year.*”

The general assembly 1712, “ considering that
“ the assemblies of this national church have, by
“ several acts, appointed the frequent celebra-
“ tion of the Lord’s Supper in all the congrega-
“ tions of this church, and judging that the due
“ observation of these acts will greatly tend to the
“ glory of God, and edification of souls; there-
“ fore did enjoin all presbyteries to inquire if the
“ said acts be duly observed by all the brethren.”

By the *sixth* act of the assembly 1724, act 6th,
assembly 1711, is revived and renewed; presby-
teries are appointed to do all they can to have
the Lord’s Supper more frequently administered
in their bounds, throughout the several months
of the year; and enjoined to take care, that on
the Lord’s Day on which the sacrament is to be
administered in any congregation, the neighbour-
ing congregations be supplied with sermons. Pres-
byteries are appointed to call their respective bre-
thren in their bounds to an account as to the ob-
servance of this: And synods to call their re-
spective presbyteries to an account as to what is
injoined them.

The presbytery of Edinburgh, by an act made
the 27th of April 1720, did recommend the sa-
crament to be celebrated in their respective
churches, at least the months after mentioned,
viz. January in Canongate, February in North-
Leith, March in all the churches of Edinburgh,
April in Corstorphin, May in South-Leith and
Kirk-Newton, June in West-Kirk and Curry,
July in Collington and Ratho, and again in Ca-
nongate,

nongate, August in Libberton and Cramond; September again in West-Kirk, October in Dud-dinston, and again in all the churches of Edin-burgh, and in November again in South-Leith; and that any parish which cannot conveniently keep their diets above-mentioned, do it in the month of December that year. And that com-municants might have more time for private pre-paration, and that as few ministers as possible might be taken from their own parish work, and so their congregations left without sermon, where-by people, that do not communicate, come and incommode communicants, and profane the Lord's Day by vaguing, idle discourse, and otherwise: *They also agreed*, that there be only two sermons on the Fast-day, one on Saturday, two on the Lord's Day, and one on Monday; that neigh-bouring ministers should provide their churches with sermon, and exhort such as were not to communicate to keep their own parish churches; and gave it as their opinion, that there should be no Church-yard sermons on such occasions (x). These alterations, inconsiderable as they were, occasioned a terrible outcry: And many elders and private Christians left their own ministers. But, in a short time, this heat subsided, and the best and greatest part of them saw that a separa-tion on such grounds would be criminal. This was the more remarkable, as the number of ser-mons was greatly lessened, without increasing in any reasonable proportion the number of com-

(x) See *Dan an Adder in the Path*; or, *Considera-tions on the new Scheme of Communions in the Presby-tery of Edinburgh*, p. 6. And *Dan in Beersheba*; or, *the Idolatry of Communion Sermons*, p. 11.

munions, which it is no wonder some should be uncharitable enough to ascribe to the laziness of ministers. Whereas the synod of Glasgow's overture is not liable to such a misrepresentation, the number of communions in every congregation being increased, and at the same time as many sermons on week days, in the course of a year, as there are in our present way.

I shall only ask my reader, are our times better than the reformation and covenanting periods, when our church approached much nearer to the primitive simplicity in dispensing the Supper of the Lord? Has our church gained any thing, has practical religion been increased by the change of the old for our present way? Does it not deserve inquiry, if our neglect of frequently communicating, be not one cause, why *the love of many has waxed cold?*

SECTION III.

I Now proceed to consider some of the principal objections against frequent communicating. And,

I. It is alledged, that "the primitive Christians were so eminent in religion, and so well prepared for the sacrament, that weekly communions might, in their time, be highly expedient; but that in our degenerate times, the case is altered, and our frequently partaking, considering our low attainments in grace, would be highly dangerous."

But, if our attainments are so low, *is there not a cause?* And what cause more probable, than our seldom attendance on that ordinance, which
our

“ causes them to flag and cool. Scarcity advances, plenty abateth, the value of every thing.
 “ Those acts of worship, which are frequently,
 “ are also slightly performed : and since we cannot preserve both, we had better part with
 “ frequency than reverence. For we shall more
 “ honour our Lord, by partaking of his supper more reverently, tho’ less frequently,
 “ than more frequently with less reverence. Accordingly, how poor are the fruits of this ordinance in the church of England, where it
 “ is so frequently dispensed ?”

To this I reply,

(1.) If frequent communicating is a duty, then danger of doing it with less advantage does not lessen our obligations to that duty. For whatever danger there is, God foresaw it, but yet did not see meet to guard against it, by enjoining us to communicate seldom. Shall we then pretend to be wiser than God? Have we found out better means for securing the honour of his institutions, than the means prescribed and practised by those who were under the infallible guidance of his spirit? Have not attempts of this kind proved the source of the worst corruptions in popery? Reason has no power to dispense with, or to derogate from the positive laws of God, on pretence of doing them a service. It is blasphemous presumption, tho’ it may put on a cloak of humility, to judge that a sufficient reason to hinder thee from frequent communicating, which our Lord did not judge a sufficient reason to hinder him from commanding it. *If thou thus judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge.* Is there in the whole Bible, any express

or tacit dispensation from frequent communicating, if we happen to imagine, that frequency will lessen our reverence? Disobedience to Christ is no part of the respect we owe to the Lord's table. *To obey is better than sacrifice.* Our Lord did not say, honour the sacrament, or dread it, or admire it, or adore it, but partake of it. We are not therefore at liberty to substitute any other mark of respect to this ordinance, in room of partaking of it. How singularly unfortunate is the command, *Do this in remembrance of me,* to be disobeyed from too much regard?

(2.) Conjecture is lighter than experience. Let us then see, whether the objection is verified or disproved by matter of fact. And here on the one side, the history of the primitive church, for more than three hundred years, proves, that constancy and reverence happily conspired together to God's glory and his churches benefit. But on the other hand, when succeeding ages attempted, by lessening the frequency to increase the reverence, the consequence was, that, by degrees, the very being of the ordinance was in danger of being lost, and a multitude of the most terrible mischiefs, and particularly a general decay of the power of godliness, overspread the *christian world*. Was there not more religion in Scotland, at the reformation and covenanting periods, when communions were more frequent? Since that ordinance began to be seldomer dispensed amongst us, has religion been a gainer? Does not the gospel thrive as well, and are not communions as much honoured with the Redeemer's presence in New-England (where, in some places, the communion is dispensed once every month, and

in all at least once in the two months) as it does with us?—As to the church of England, I can prove from the writings of some of their divines, that tho' they absurdly enough read the communion service almost every sabbath and holiday, yet that, in most parish churches, it is only dispensed thrice a year, and even then the communicants few. Nay, as I remarked in the preceding section, so early as the time of Cartwright and Calderwood, infrequency in communicating was objected to the church of England. So that whatever contempt may be poured on the Lord's table by any in that church, will never prove the objection well grounded.

(3.) Does not the Bible speak strongly on the solemnity of prayer, and the danger of rashness in speaking to God? And does it not tell us, that the word when heard unworthily is a *favour of death unto death*? Shall we then pray seldom, and hear the word seldom, that we may do it with the greater solemnity; and so not expose ourselves to the danger of praying unworthily, and hearing unworthily? Would not this way of reasoning be fallacious, if applied to prayer, and hearing the word? And is it not equally so, when applied to the sacrament? The godly will not quit their reverence to the Lord's table upon any the greatest frequency, as appears by their uniting frequency and reverence in other religious institutions. And the shew of reverence the ungodly bring to it, is not worth the preserving: and much less is it worth the purchasing at so dear a rate, as the depriving saints of this ordinance.

(4.) Prayer, hearing the word, &c. are not less useful by reason of their frequency. Those who abound in them most, find most benefit in them. The same may be said of meditation, self-examination, and other religious exercises. Why then should it be supposed, that rareness in remembering Christ's death in the sacrament, should add to the effect of that ordinance?—Novelty, it must be owned, adds a force to every thing. Fulness brings cheapness on the very bread of life: yet who would infer from this, that it ought to be withheld till famine enhance the price? Or that we ought to be seldom in preaching the great and heart-affecting truths of the gospel, lest by oftener insisting on them, they should affect less?

I shall conclude this head with the words of Mr. Charnock (c), “To be frequent in communicating is agreeable to the nature of the ordinance, and necessary for the wants of a christian. By too much fasting we often lose our stomachs. Too much deferring does more hurt than frequent communicating. The oftener we carefully and believingly communicate, the more disposed we shall be for it. If it be worthily received, it increaseth our reverence of God, and affection to him. And that is the best reverence of God which owneth his authority. Christ's death is to be every day fixed in our thoughts; and to help our weakness, there should be a frequent representation of it to our senses, in such a way as Christ has instituted, not as men may prescribe.”

(c) Charnock, ubi supra, and p. 747.

§ 4. IV. But it will still be urged, "That
 " partaking of the Lord's Supper is the nearest
 " approach we can make on earth to the great
 " and dreadful God, and therefore requires such
 " awe and reverence, and such degrees of so-
 " lemn preparation, as would be utterly impos-
 " sible, were that ordinance frequently dis-
 " pensed."

I grant many pious and excellent divines have said this and a great deal more. But where does the Scripture say so? *To the law, and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because, in so far, there is no light in them.*

We ought never to approach God in any ordinance without a reverent, penitent, humble frame, and a heart broken for sin. But it would be a strange inference, that therefore there ought to be a fast-day, with three sermons, and a preparation day, with two sermons, before every time the sacrament is dispensed. These dispositions are necessary in every approach to God in other ordinances, and therefore if public fasts and preparations are necessary before the sacrament, they are necessary before them also. We seem to have made a distinction in this matter, beyond what we have warrant for in the word of God, as if this ordinance were placed at a greater distance from others, than it really is.

The vast preparations the people of the Jews were obliged to make before the promulgation of the law, are urged in support of this notion (d). And from the misapplication of such passages of scripture, many of the best of Christi-

(d) See Exod. xix, xx. chap.

ans approach their reconciled God and father with a slavish awe, like that of the Israelites, when approaching the mount that burned with fire; or that of Peter, when he said to our Lord, *Depart from me, for I am a sinful man.* They sit down at the table of the Lord, with as great terror as the high priest entered the holiest of all on the day of atonement, when, for the very least accidental miscarriage or inadvertency, during his short stay there, he was in danger of being struck dead. Doubtless the seldom dispensing this ordinance has led many of the less judicious into such melancholy superstitious apprehensions, and raised such terrors in their mind, that they could not attend upon God in this institution without distraction, and thus were deprived of much of the comfort and benefit, which otherwise they would have reaped from it. Such I would intreat to consider the differences of the legal and evangelical dispensation, and of the spirit of bondage flowing from the one, and the spirit of adoption which suits the other, as represented to us, Rom. viii. 15. Gal. iv. 25, 26. Heb. iv. 16. x. 19,—22. and xii. 18—24.

And here I cannot but take occasion to remark, that the day of atonement was the *only anniversary day of fasting*, humiliation, and confession of sins which God enjoined the Israelites. All their other annual holidays, except these which they themselves appointed, after their return from the Babylonish captivity, were days of joy and thanksgiving (*e*). If then the Jews had more thanksgivings than fasts, why should not the Christians? Is not our cause of joy greater?

(*e*) Universal history, vol. III. Octavo edition, p. 44.

§ 5. V. But we are told, that “introducing frequent communions is an *innovation*, and “that all innovations are dangerous.”—But it is an innovation in no other sense, than the doctrine of justification by faith was in the days of Luther. The truest and purest antiquity is on our side: whereas our present practice is a plain defection from the primitive pattern.

§ 6. VI. It is further argued, that “the greatest part of well-disposed people in Scotland are averse to this change.”

But in matters of doctrine and worship, we should take our direction only from the word of God, since the best and wisest of Men have erred, and may err; and it is natural to most people, to be prejudiced against any thing in religion, to which they have not been accustomed. In the present question, I have met with many of the most solid and experienced Christians, who have declared, that frequent communions in the way proposed, would be highly desirable. But they added, that the bulk of good people were so keen against it, that they thought it should not be attempted. Whereas, I have reason to think, that if good men who approve the overture, were but half as honest in telling their sentiments, and half as zealous to make proselytes, as those who disapprove it, in a very short time, most who have any relish for religion, would drop their opposition, and pray for its success. But generally those on the wrong side of a question, are most clamorous and noisy.

If great names were of any weight in such a debate, I could easily multiply authorities. But

I shall content myself with mentioning the few that follow.

Calvin handles this subject with great accuracy in his institutions, lib. iv. cap. 17. § 44, —46. He tells us it was then the practice, to receive the communion but once a year, and that in a formal, superficial manner (*f*). And after having urged frequent communicating from the design of the ordinance, and the practice of the apostolic and primitive church, he adds, “And doubtless the custom of communicating only once a year, is the invention of the devil, who ever was the instrument of introducing it.” And a little after. “Our practice ought to be the very reverse. *Every week at least*, the Lord’s table should be spread before the assembly of Christians, and the promises upon which they should feed there opened up to them. None indeed should be forced to it, but all should be exhorted and encouraged (*g*).”

Mr. Baxter in his Christian Directory, part II. p. 101. having proposed the question, how often should the sacrament be now administered, that it neither grow into contempt nor strangeness? he thus answers it.

(*f*) Hæc abunde ostendunt, sacramentum non institutum ideo fuisse, ut semel quotannis acciperetur, idque perfunctorie, ut nunc communiter moris est. § 44.

(*g*) Et sane hæc consuetudo quæ semel quotannis communicare jubet, certissimum est Diaboli inventum, cujuscunque tandem ministerio invec̃ta fuerit. *Et paulo post*, Longe aliter factum oportuit. Singulis ad minimum hebdomadibus proponenda erat Christianorum cœtuli mensa Domini, declarandæ promissiones, quæ nos in ea spiritaliter pascere. Nullus quidem necessitate cogendus, sed cohortandi omnes & stimulandi. § 46.

Ordi-

Ordinarily, in well disciplined churches, it should be still every Lord's day. For, (1.) We have no reason to prove, that the apostles example and appointment in this case was proper to those times, any more than that praise and thanksgiving daily is proper to them: and we may as well deny the obligation of other institutions or apostolical orders, as that. (2.) It is a part of the settled order for the Lord's day's worship, and omitting it, *maimeth and altereth the worship of the day*, and occasioneth the omission of the thanksgiving and praise, and lively commemorations of Christ, which should be then most performed; and so Christians, by use, grow habited to sadness, and a mourning melancholy religion, and grow unacquainted with much of the worship and spirit of the gospel. (3.) Hereby the Papists lamentable corruptions of this ordinance have grown up, even by an excess of reverence and fear, which seldom receiving doth increase, till they are come to worship bread as their God. (4.) By seldom communicating, men are seduced to think all proper *communion of churches* lieth in that *sacrament*, and to be more profanely bold in abusing many other parts of worship. (5.) There are better means, by teaching and discipline, to keep the *sacrament* from contempt, than the omitting or displacing of it. (6.) Every Lord's day is no oftener than Christians need it. (7.) The frequency will teach them to live prepared, and not only to make much ado once a month, or quarter, when the same work is neglected all the year beside; even as one that liveth in continual expectation of death, will live in continual preparation: when he that expect-

eth it but in some grievous sickness, will then be frightened into some seeming preparations, which are not the habit of his soul, but laid by again when the disease is over.

But yet I must add, that in some undisciplined churches, and upon some occasions, it may be longer omitted, or seldomer used. No duty is a duty at all times. And therefore extraordinary cases may raise such impediments, as may hinder us a long time from this, and many other privileges. But the ordinary faultiness of our imperfect hearts, that are apt to grow customary and dull, is no good reason why it should be seldom, any more than why other special duties of worship and church communion should be seldom. Read well the epistles of Paul to the Corinthians, and you will find that they were then as bad as the true Christians are now, and that even in the sacrament they were very culpable; and yet Paul seeketh not to cure them by their seldomer communicating. Thus far Mr. Baxter.

A worthy minister in the shire of Air, in a letter to me, dated October 10th, argues thus,
 “ What a reproach is it to the church of Scot-
 “ land, which boasts of a farther degree of re-
 “ formation than even some other protestant
 “ churches, to fall so far, I had almost said, so
 “ scandalously short of them all, in commemo-
 “ rating the dying love of our blessed redeemer?
 “ I know it is alledged, frequently communica-
 “ ting will lessen our reverence for the sacra-
 “ ment. But the contrary will, I presume,
 “ abundantly appear, by comparing those who
 “ do now communicate four times, and oftener,
 “ in the year, with those who never think of it
 “ above

“ above once. And whatever may be the case
“ with respect to those who do not perform religious duties in a serious manner at all, yet
“ as to those who do, I believe it will be found,
“ that the more frequently real Christians are
“ exercised in them, whether praying, reading,
“ hearing, meditating, or communicating, they
“ are apt to acquire still higher degrees of perfection, in these useful exercises.

“ As to abridging the number of sermons, &c.
“ besides the obvious necessity of this, in order
“ to the greater frequency of that ordinance, I
“ think it seems to be allowed, by most thinking people, that we have got into rather a
“ too mobish way, I may call it, of administering that serious and solemn ordinance. I
“ dare say, that if a computation were to be
“ made, it would be found, that in some places
“ where there are not above 500 or 600 communicants, there will be at least upon the
“ Lord's day, near as many thousand people,
“ most of whom must be at least idle and irreverent spectators, or rather disturbers; not only
“ crowding the passages, so as renders it next to
“ impossible for weak and infirm people to go
“ to and from the table with due composure, but
“ in a constant motion to and from ale-houses,
“ yards, and other places, where barrels are
“ kept for the entertainment of successive companies, whose conversation generally gives offence to every serious Christian, that accidentally over-hears it.”

Let none think, says Mr. Willison of Dundee, that frequency of the administration would expose to contempt: for I am sure no worthy communicant

municant will undervalue this ordinance because of a frequent repetition, but rather prize it the more. Did the primitive Christians bring it into contempt by partaking every Lord's day? Nay, was not their esteem of it much higher than these who dispense or receive it only once in two years? I wish the words of our *dying Saviour*, and the acts of our *general assembly*, relative to this matter, were more adverted to by one and all of us (*b.*)—And in another place, he thus answers the question, *Are we as much obliged to frequent communicating as the apostles and primitive Christians were?* Tho' they were in a much better frame for it, as having had more recent and warm impressions of the love and death of their redeemer constantly upon their spirits than we have; yet certainly we are under as strong obligations to frequent partaking as the first Christians were: for we have the same Lord and Saviour that they had, and are under the same obligations of love and gratitude to him. We have the same need of the application of Christ's blood, and a confirmed interest in his meritorious death, that they had; and consequently the same need of this memorial feast and sealing ordinance (*i.*) And answering the question, *Is not frequency apt to breed formality in this duty?* he observes, (1.) The same thing may be alledged with respect to other duties, which yet is no good argument for the unfrequent practice of them. (2.) This fault is nowise chargeable upon the holy ordinance and institution of Christ,

(*b.*) Willison's preface to his *Sacramental Catechism*, p. 9.

(*i.*) *Sacramental Catechism*, p. 86.

but upon the corruption and carelessness of our hearts, which we ought diligently to watch and strive against; endeavouring, in Christ's strength, as often as we partake, so often to prepare for it with all due care and solemnity (k).

Mr. Jonathan Edwards, of Northampton in New-England, in a book, intitled, *Some thoughts concerning the present revival of religion*, p. 214. of the Edinburgh edition, says, "It seems plain, by the scripture, that the primitive Christians were wont to celebrate this memorial of the sufferings of their dear Redeemer every Lord's day; and so, I believe, it will be again in the church of Christ, in days that are approaching."

§ 7. VII. It is alledged, *increasing the frequency of communions, especially in the way proposed in the synod's overture, will occasion a new and formidable secession.*

But, as Mr. Randal has well observed, in a paper referred to, Section IV. § 1. "Most who would leave a church on so frivolous a pretence, are in the secession already: and probably the present way of administering the sacrament may be one cause of it. Too nice a picking of ministers at these times, taught the people to despise some, whom now the best amongst us would willingly pull out of their graves, if they could. The Secession is now less formidable thro' their division." And the party of them who befriend the burghers oath, have, of late, expressed so much moderation and charity to the church of Scotland, in some of their

(k) *Sacramental Catechism*, p. 87.

printed papers (*1*), that I cannot bring myself to think they would condemn an overture so highly reasonable. When people see that it is not laziness, but a subjection to the authority of Christ; and regard to their edification, that make us desirous of more frequent communions, their prejudices will subside. And should it be otherwise, the affections of our people, valuable as they are, would be too dearly purchased, by disregard to the commands of Jesus.

SECTION IV.

I AM now to enquire, whether the synod's overture is not the most proper, and least exceptionable means to promote frequent communicating. I shall not be stiff in asserting this; but hitherto no better plan has been proposed, that I know of. I chuse, in this part of the subject, to deliver my sentiments in the words of two worthy ministers, who have thought much on the question.

The one is Mr. Willison of Dundee, preface to his Sacramental Catechism, p. 12. "I confess there is one thing amongst us, which is a great obstruction to the frequent celebration of this ordinance, viz. the great numbers of ministers and preachers now used on such occasions, which truly makes that solemn work a business of such outward toil and labour to the administrators, as discourages them fre-

(1) See Mr. Hutton's Speech, p. 55. Mr. Ralph Erskine's Review of Mr. Gib's Remarks, p. 17. and Synod Sermon, p. 32.

quently

“quently to undertake it. So that till some re-
“gulation be made in the aforefaid respect, I
“despair of seeing this holy ordinance dispensed so
“frequently amongst us as it ought to be.—
“In the days of old, there was less preaching at
“communions, but much power and life in them;
“but in our days there is much preaching, but
“little power. Not that I am against much
“preaching at these occasions, where there is an
“appetite among the hearers, and where plenty
“of ministers may be had, without laying
“the neighbouring congregations desolate, or
“proving any let to the frequency of this ordi-
“nance: but to make it a *standing order*, that
“there shall be so many preachings, whether
“there be an appetite or no, or whatever in-
“conveniencies should follow, I apprehend can-
“not be so easily justified. I acknowledge, about
“the time of our late happy *revolution*, when
“so much preaching at communions began to be
“a settled practice, there were such vehement
“desires among the people after the ordinances,
“and lively preaching of the word, that had
“been so scarce for so many years before, that
“it was necessary to gratify them, with much
“preaching, at these solemn occasions; but it is
“not to be expected, that these longings should
“always continue. In the primitive times of
“christianity, when the disciples hearts flowed
“with love to their lately crucified and ascend-
“ed Redeemer, they had such burning desires
“after the ordinances, and preaching of the
“gospel, that the apostle Paul, at the celebra-
“tion of the Lord’s Supper, Acts xx. 7. was
“encouraged to continue preaching with the
“people

“ people till midnight; yet none ever pled, that
 “ the apostle’s practice, on that occasion, should
 “ be a standing rule for the church, in all time
 “ coming.”

The other is Mr. Randal of Inchtute, in a written paper, where a plan much like that of our synod is proposed. And as that paper first engaged me to apply my thoughts to this important subject, I shall insert the greatest part of it.

“ Our present manner, says he, of partaking
 “ of the sacrament, by employing three working
 “ days in attendance on preaching, on every
 “ such occasion, renders the frequent partaking
 “ of that ordinance inconvenient, if not impossible. For,

“ (1.) It is hard to bring our people to relinquish a frequent administration, if it must deprive them of so many days of labour. And as industry and improvement increase, that difficulty will increase also; especially, as some concerned in these things, have not so great a respect, as might be wished, for religious institutions. But if all were willing to attend, there are not many seasons where, in landward parishes, they can have leisure, especially as the lint improvement goes on, which much shortens the leisure time in summer.

“ (2.) Tho’ ministers may not speak it out, the expence, with which dispensing the sacrament frequently in our way would be attended, will ever be an effectual stop to it.

“ (3.) Our present way is very inconvenient to every single minister. As almost all have the sacrament once a year, each must assist five or six neighbours; and this hurries and hinders,

ders,

“ ders, in a great measure, from that solemnity
“ of thought, which is only to be found in calm
“ retirement. In the parish where the sacra-
“ ment is dispensed, the minister’s wife and fa-
“ mily must be all Marthas, and no time allow-
“ ed them to look after the better part.

“ (4.) It is equally inconvenient to ministers
“ as a society. It often proves the source of
“ heart-burning, misunderstanding, party, and
“ faction amongst us. Tho’ we have a regard
“ to a neighbour, yet the aversion of our parish
“ to him, sometimes not well founded too, tempts
“ us to purchase peace at home, by overlooking
“ him on such occasions: and this proves a
“ wound that can scarcely be healed. But by
“ dispensing this ordinance in its primitive sim-
“ plicity, one occasion of distance and interfe-
“ rings will be removed, and brotherly love pro-
“ moted.—Sometimes jealousies, that such a
“ candidate for a vacant congregation would not
“ employ us, but popular men from a distance,
“ at his communions, occasions us, underhand
“ to oppose his settlement. Every new settle-
“ ment is half my own, says the neighbour:
“ half my peace and comfort depends upon it.
“ In the way now proposed, there could be no
“ room for such suspicions, and therefore it is
“ probable candor and friendship would more
“ prevail.

“ (5.) In our present way, there can, in most
“ places, be no feast in the winter.
“ If it be alledged, That this will prevent
“ peoples being edified as they now are by a di-
“ versity of gifts; I answer,

“ (∴)

“(1.) We cannot expect the church should
 “ be edified by neglecting the means the head of
 “ the church has appointed for their edification,
 “ (of which frequent remembering him in the
 “ breaking of bread is one) and substituting,
 “ in their room, means of our own devising.
 “ For our Lord has nowhere prescribed a mul-
 “ titude of sermons on such occasions, as a means
 “ of our edification. Whereas, in receiving the
 “ bread and wine, he has promised his special
 “ presence.”

“(2.) Four preparation days in the course of
 “ a year, may procure as great a variety of gifts
 “ as we now have. Besides, congregations may
 “ and ought to fast often, in which way diver-
 “ sity of gifts may be obtained, without neglec-
 “ ting the dying command of Christ.”

§ 2. It was hinted to me, by a worthy and
 judicious friend, that communions might be had
 in our present way, if ministers were confined
 to one assistant; and if the minister of the parish,
 and that one assistant preached each of them three
 or four times: or if that should be reckoned bur-
 densome, week-days sermons might be got from
 probationers, or even from neighbouring mini-
 sters, without asking their assistance, and thus
 throwing their churches vacant on the Lord's
 day.

If I can be convinced, that frequent commu-
 nions may be had in this way, without danger of
 superstition, or hurt to society, I shall not be the
 first to decline such a plan. I own, it is free
 from some objections which startle people at our
 synod's overture: but, to me, it seems liable to
 greater difficulties of another kind.

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(1.) Would not this take up ministers as much, or more, from private preparation, as our present way, which I have heard many complain of on that account?

(2.) How few probationers are there in many corners? And could their assistance be more easily procured, how disagreeable would our employing of them be to some congregations?

(3.) Would it not be hard on poor people, and occasion the murmurs of others, that a parish, four times every year, should spend three entire working days, in the space of a week, in religious exercises? And would not this hardship appear greater to people, when there was little variety of gifts, only their own minister and one assistant?

(4.) Employing neighbouring ministers will not remove the difficulties mentioned in the last head.—But I own, tho' some may think it a paradox, it is my judgment, that neighbours ought never to be employed at sacraments. For there are some who will not, and others who dare not, employ their neighbours. And this being looked on as a piece of contempt, is an unhappy source of division amongst us. Whereas, if it were the custom, always to employ people from a distance, every one, without giving umbrage to any of his brethren, would employ whom he pleased.

§ 3. It is objected, that a multitude of congregations will be thrown vacant by our overture: for if the sacrament be dispensed thro' a whole presbytery on the same day, sixteen or eighteen parishes in neighbouring presbyteries must be thrown vacant to supply them with assistants. But,

(1.) Tho'

(1.) Though many congregations will, no doubt, be thrown vacant, even by our overture; yet it will not be a whole countryside of contiguous congregations, as is the case at present; for the assistants will be got from different presbyteries, and some ministers will seek none.

(2.) In our present way, the same parish is often vacant five Sabbaths in the space of ten or twelve weeks: But if the overture succeed, this can scarce ever happen.

§ 4. It has been urged, that celebrating the sacrament four times in the year, will scarce be practicable in some parts of the Highlands, and therefore ought not to be bound upon them by an act: And that it would be highly inconvenient for a whole presbytery there to have the sacrament the same day, as they would find it hard to be supplied with assistants from neighbouring presbyteries, considering the great distance.—I believe, none will oppose altering or amending the overture in this respect, if once it were known what is the alteration which northern synods would judge most for their benefit.

§ 5. Some were of opinion, that abridging the number of sermons more gradually might perhaps prevent the opposition which the overture, in its present form, will undoubtedly meet with. To this I reply, in the words of a worthy Member of this Synod.

“As to correcting these abuses gradually, it is highly probable, that any such half or faint attempt, would defeat its own design. Puffed with unanimous assailants are easily beat back. The abuses complained of are such, as we may boldly avow our design to correct: Whereas,

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“ if we conceal this design, or seem ashamed to
 “ profess it, this very conduct will harden such
 “ of our people as may be wedded to the present
 “ way, in their prejudices. Palliatives will look
 “ more like slothfulness in ourselves: Whereas,
 “ if we boldly avow the whole design at once,
 “ the abuses which we aim at will be allowed, I
 “ believe, to be indefensible, and the remedy
 “ proposed must be admitted to be the only cure:
 “ And, by that means, a conviction, I think,
 “ will be more easily fastened upon our people.
 “ Besides, as nobody proposes to stop at the first
 “ step, the very slowness of our procedure will
 “ encourage and occasion opposition, at least pro-
 “ tract and lengthen it out. Every new step may
 “ be expected to raise as great a clamour as the
 “ whole would do, which in the one case would
 “ be over at once, whereas in the other case
 “ it would be constantly fed by fresh springs.
 “ And the people having once declared them-
 “ selves, as this would involve them in a con-
 “ stant opposition to every further alteration,
 “ before they really could perceive the reason-
 “ ableness of the whole that was intended, so it
 “ would render it more unpopular in ministers,
 “ to be so often flying in the face of what is al-
 “ ready discovered to be so unpopular. What
 “ happened at the first establishment of the pre-
 “ sent *Version* of the *Psalms*, is an evidence what
 “ an advantage it is to accomplish any consider-
 “ able alteration all at once. It was extremely
 “ unpopular, as it may easily be imagined, any
 “ thing that had the appearance of altering the
 “ *Bible* would be. But as the thing was boldly
 “ begun over all Scotland on the same day, and
 “ ministers

"ministers were united among themselves, the
"noise made against it was very soon over."

§ 6. Some have observed, that *providential incidents or a remarkable down-pouring of the Spirit, may make it reasonable to have week-days sermons, at a communion, on other days, as well as the Saturday; and that therefore it is a strange overture, that for four weeks of the year Christ may not be preached on a week-day, except once let it be never so convenient.* I heartily agree, that though ten thousand general assemblies would make such an act, our obedience to it would be sinful. But, did the Presbyterians, by abolishing Christmas, &c. enjoin, that Christ should never be preached on these days? No doubt, that was far from their intention. A positive injunction, that there should be no sermons on the Thursday before, or the Monday after the communion, would be criminal. And so would a positive injunction, that there should be no sermon on the 30th of January, or the 25th of December. But it would not be unworthy of our church, to give it as her judgment, that the stated week-days sermons, which have been in use in Scotland before and after communions, have not a great deal more foundation in the word of God, than the anniversaries of the church of England.

Time will not allow me to consider other objections. The public may expect soon a more distinct defence of the synod's overture, by the Reverend Mr. Randal. I have perused, with pleasure, since part of this essay was sent to the press, and almost all of it composed, the first three sheets of his manuscript, in which are many new
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and ingenious proofs, that communicating as often as the primitive church did, is our duty (m).

May God send forth his light and his truth, to lead us, and guide us, and to bring us to his holy habitation. May we be willing meekly and humbly to receive the law from his mouth. And if our eye be thus single, our whole body shall be full of light.

(m) Though Mr. Randal handles the argument in a different method from me, and there are very few particulars in which we coincide, yet I think myself bound to acquaint the Public, they would not have been troubled with this hasty Essay, if I had seen Mr. Randal's papers before composing it; or if any thing of value had been published in support of the Synod's Overture, so timeously, as that it could have been dispersed, before the meeting of Glasgow Presbytery, the third Wednesday of this month, (viz. January 1740.)

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